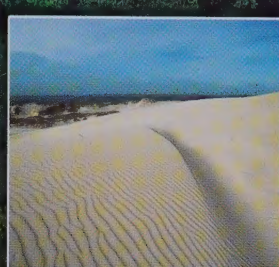
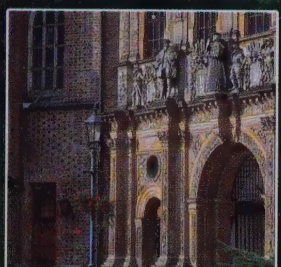
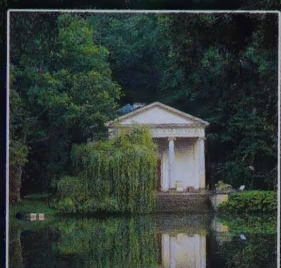
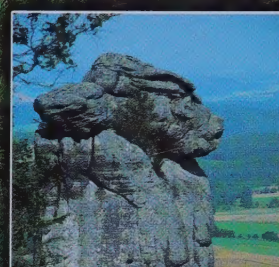


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# MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACES IN POLAND



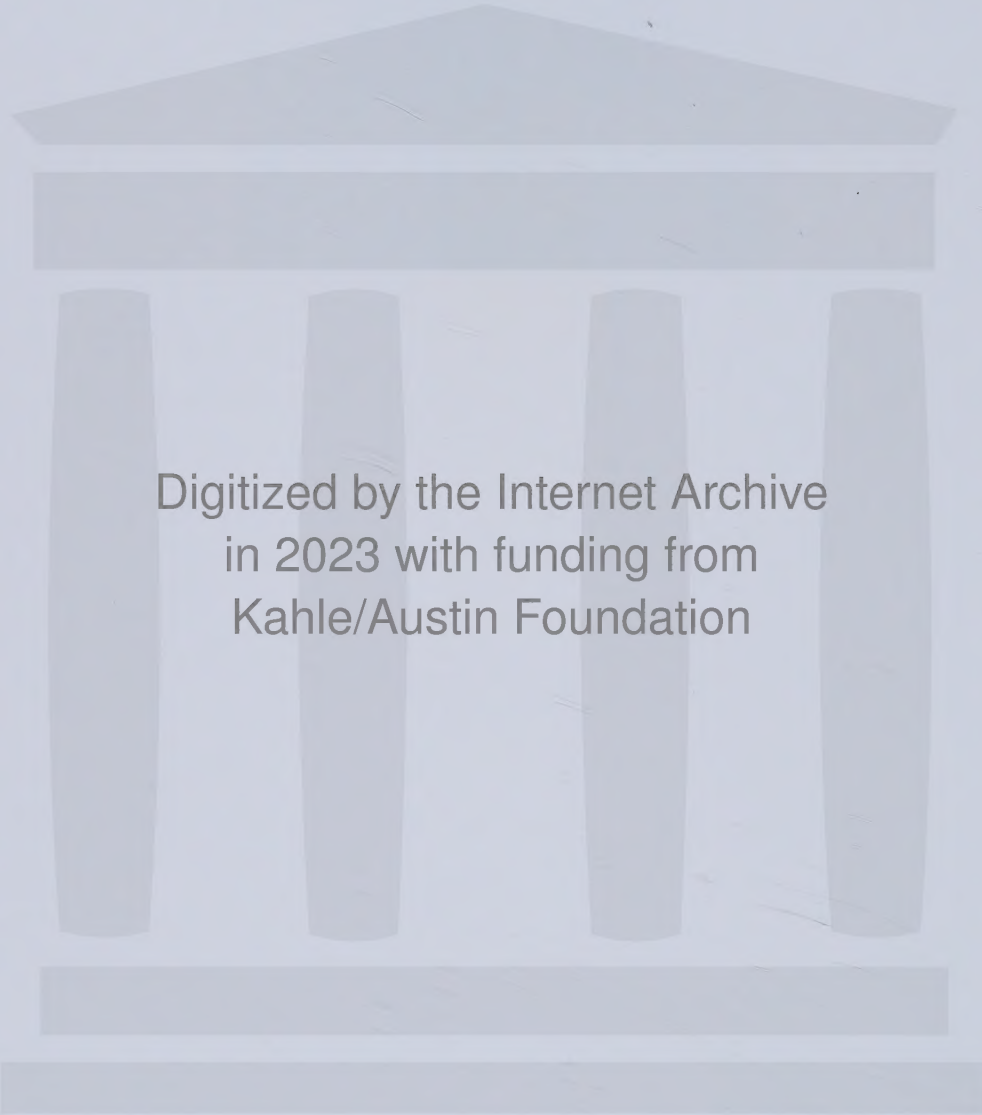






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Na pamiątkę pobytu w Polsce

Grzegorzowi — rodzina Pieczarów;

Tom & Ola

Sylnia & Gabrysia

Katowice 9. 10. 2006 rok

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# ARKADIA NEAR ŁOWICZ

Famous sentimental park



The Temple of Diana

18th-century travellers regarded Arkadia as one of the most impressive parks in Europe. Admiring Arkadia, visitors described it as "the creation of a visualised fairy tale".

The park was created in 1778 by Helena Radziwiłł, owner of the nearby residence of Nieborów. Arkadia – a mythical land of happiness and serene simplicity – was envisaged here in the form of a romantic park with picturesque clusters of trees, vast meadows and a pond with a Wyspa Uczuć (Sentimental Island). In accordance with the fashion prevailing at the end of the 18th and

the beginning of the 19th centuries, this meticulously shaped landscape was decorated with buildings resembling ancient and Gothic monuments: a temple of Diana with a ceiling fresco (*Eos*) by Jan Piotr Norblin and "ancient" ruins: a Greek Arch and Aqueduct. Ascending an artificial hill with a Sybil Cave, one can also see Gothic House. This building, also called the Sanctuary of Misery and Melancholy, is an interesting example of preromantic architecture. The duchess had nearly 200 fragments of genuine tombstones built in the walls of some of the buildings of the complex. The dates of the fragments vary from ancient times to the 18th century. Some of them are unique Renaissance sculptures, taken from the collegiate church in Łowicz, being renovated at that time.

# BABIA GÓRA

Queen of the Beskid Mountains



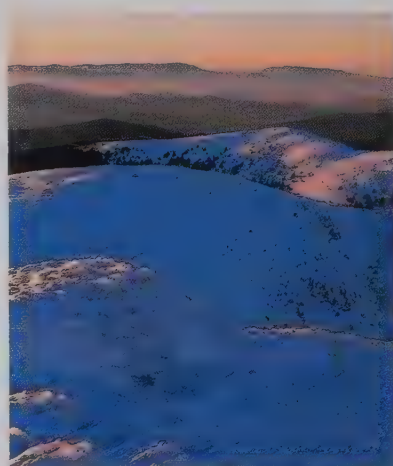
Diablak (the highest peak of the massif of Babia Góra)

Babia Góra is the highest elevation in Poland outside the Tatra Mountains (Diablak, the highest peak of the massif, is 1725 metres high), so vegetation zones are easily discernible. Apart from the plants of lower and upper mountain zones there are zones of subalpine forest and high-elevated alpine grassland.

Throughout history the mountain has been said to be inhabited by various ghosts and witches, one of them being Baba, who allegedly prevented adventurers from reaching the top. Babia Góra was famous for having many peaks and counting them was a point of ambition of many explorers. Baba, seeing a few travellers forced to stay for a night near one of the tops and sleeping round a campfire, heads covered with blankets, exclaimed: "Reaching any of the twelve peaks of the mountain, never did I see such a curious thing". Then she walked away, terrified. As she had been heard by one of the adventurers, in the morning the whole company could return home, satisfied with the information gathered by chance.

Now only steep slopes can discourage less experienced trekkers. Reaching the top of Babia Góra is worth the toil as the breathtaking views make up for all the sacrifice.

In order to protect the wildlife and the character of the slopes The Babiogórski National Park was established, one of the first Polish nature reserves to be included in the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Directory.



A view from Babia Góra

The view from the highest peak of the Beskid range can satisfy even the most demanding trekkers. The Tatras form an impressive background for the beautiful scenery of the Beskid Żywiecki range and the Pilsko massif.

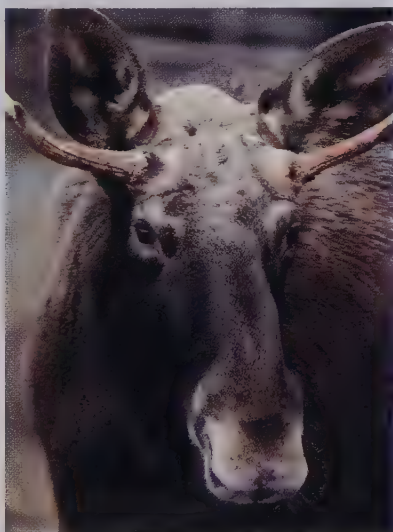
# THE BIEBRZA MARSHLANDS

Bird paradise



In the early spring, melting snow makes the Biebrza river flood over an area comparable to the Śniardwy lake. Only hilly islands, clusters of trees and high reeds dot this expanse of water.

Elks living in the Biebrza marshlands are the only ones to survive World War II. Their number has since increased to a few hundred. They move with surprising agility and grace. They are also great swimmers and can even dive.



The Biebrza is the only European river that has remained unchanged in all its parts. Flowing across a relatively flat area, it floods freely over the whole valley, forming a long stretch of wild marshland (more than 20 kilometres wide and 160 kilometres long). For a naturalist, so vast a peat bog, where the layer of decaying plants absorbing water like a sponge can be as much as six metres thick, is invaluable. This almost inaccessible land with few settlements is one of Europe's largest bird reserves. The region is protected under the international RAMSAR convention. Birds of 263 species have been recorded there, which is the greatest number in Poland. 185 of these species nest and rear their young. Most of them are water and marsh birds, many in danger of extinction, like the great snipe (*Capella media*), the ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*), the Eurasian curlew (*Numenius arquata*) and some birds of prey, such as the short-toed eagle (*Circus gallicus*) and the booted eagle (*Hieraeetus pennatus*). In the spring huge flocks of geese, ducks, cranes and ruffs fly over the marsh to the north, heading back to the south in the autumn. The Biebrza marshland is also famous for wolves, elks and beavers. The biggest national park in Poland, covering an area of nearly 600 square kilometres, was established there in 1993.

# BARANÓW SANDOMIERSKI

Manneristic castle



The courtyard in the Baranów castle

Called "a small Wawel" (Wawel being a royal castle in Cracow), it is one of the most interesting palaces built in Poland in the second part of the Renaissance period. The palace was most likely designed by outstanding Italian architect Santio Gucci, who came to Cracow in c. 1550 and for many years received commissions from Stefan Batory, the king of Poland, and Anna Jagiellon, his wife. The designs of the Florentine architect include the tombs in the royal Wawel cathedral in Cracow, influential in the later development of art in Poland.

The Baranów Castle, built in the years 1591-1606 for Rafał and Andrzej Leszczyński, closely resembles other buildings designed by Gucci. The square courtyard is surrounded by colonnades combined in an elegant and sophisticated way with an inner staircase. Fabulous details following the style of Italian Renaissance art, such as

rosettes and heads of imaginary animals, were made in workshops near Kielce.

At the end of the 17th century the Lubomirski family, the new owners of the castle, decided to rebuild it and commissioned Dutch architect Tilman van Gameren. Near the outer facade of the western wing a row of columns was erected to support a gallery running at the level of the first floor. Unfortunately, rich interior decorations, such as plasters by Giovanni Battista Falconi, were destroyed by two fires – in 1849 and 1898.

The impressive bulk of the castle is surrounded by geometrical hedges and a romantic 18th-century park with exotic trees, both domestic and foreign, like the tulip tree.



# BIAŁYSTOK

Palace of the Branicki family



The palace and the surrounding park are regarded as one of the most impressive baroque complexes in Poland. Sadly, magnificent interior decorations were completely destroyed by fire in 1944 and few elements have been reconstructed since then. The palace is the site of the School of Medicine.

The impressive palace surrounded by a two-level terraced park deserves its name — The Versailles of Podlasie. It was renovated by Jan Klemens Branicki (1689-1771), praised by his contemporaries as the most “managerial Polish aristocrat”. Having inherited riches that were enormous, yet burdened with debts, the aristocrat vigorously increased profitability, implementing many projects, such as road-building and improving water-courses used for communication near Białystok. Soon two “flotillas” sailed along the Narew and the San, and Biały-

stok boasted clean streets and brick buildings surrounded by trees. Shortly after not only did Braniecki repay his debts, but he also gained huge profits, estimated at 1 m zlotys a year. He used the money to enlarge and decorate his palaces, investing mainly in buildings in Warsaw and Białystok. The latter had already been rebuilt in the 17th century by Tilman van Gameren, but only after Branicki’s renovations made in the years 1728-1768 was it a residence worthy of a wealthy aristocrat. Part of the renovation was building a second floor crowned with a pediment filled with the Branicki blazon and a statue of Hercules supporting a globe. A magnificent staircase with black marble columns and statues of Atlas are also a remarkable feature of the luxury interior. The enlightened aristocrat established a private theatre stage and an enormous library and often invited artists.

# THE BIESZCZADY

In the wild



High mountain grasslands (*połoniny*); Wetlińska and Caryńska.

A characteristic feature of the Bieszczady range are *połoniny*, or high mountain grasslands (at elevations exceeding 1050 metres). They cover peaks of the highest mountains in the Bieszczady, though only the names of three of them include the word "połonina", Wetlińska and Caryńska being the best known. The former was used as grazing land until 1945, the result being fewer rare plant species recorded there than in Połonina Caryńska.



A lynx

The fauna of the Bieszczady is particularly rich. For example, there are many species of birds of prey, the deer, the bear, the bison, the wolf, the wildcat and the lynx, which is the symbol of the Bieszczady National Park.

The mountains are still untouched to an extent, but are becoming increasingly popular with trekkers. In the summer it is hard to find peace and serenity as main tourist routes and towns serving as good bases are full of trekkers. Vegetation zones in the Bieszczady differ slightly from those in other Polish mountain ranges. The local climate conditions result in the absence of spruce forest of the upper mountain zone and subalpine pine forest. In order to protect the unique wildlife of the region, especially beech forests and *połoniny*, or high mountain grasslands, in 1992 the Bieszczady National Park along with the Ciśniańsko-Wetliński Landscape Park and the San Valley Landscape Park were included in the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Directory. A unique feature of the Bieszczady is the process of rewilding of areas changed formerly by civilisation. The process, recorded since 1947, is a result of abandoning the region (partly due to expelling local inhabitants of foreign origin after World War II) and declining economic activity.

# BISKUPIN

prehistoric settlement



Famous Polish historian Paweł Jasienica was right to call Biskupin “a history pie”.

There was a settlement by the Biskupińskie lake as early as the Palaeolithic age. The oldest remains of human presence there date back to 10-12,000 years ago. It was then that reindeer hunters made a camp by the lake. A little later, in Neolithic times, the first farmers built a house, deciding to settle down there. There is also a *kraal* – probably a cult object, surrounded by a system of trenches – from the early period of the Bronze Age. The biggest attraction, however, is a settlement from about the 8th century BC. It was built on an island with strong natural defences, that has since changed into a peninsula. The settlement was discovered in 1933 by Walenty Schweitzer, a teacher from a local school. Surrounded by a palisade made of logs stuck aslant in the ground and a wooden wall filled with soil behind it, the solidly fortified town was inhabited by about 1,200 people. The site has been explored by archaeologists since 1934. A part of the settlement has been reconstructed (including bread and pottery ovens) and can be visited by tourists.

The Biskupin archaeological reserve, about 50 kilometres south of Bydgoszcz, covers an area of 57.5 acres. A number of buildings (there were about a hundred) and the original network of eleven parallel streets and one surrounding the town have been carefully reconstructed to show the day-to-day conditions of our remote ancestors.

Every year there is a huge fair held in Biskupin. Visitors can learn the secrets of ancient crafts, grind grain with a handmill or watch the process of producing tar.



# BRONOWICE

The "Rydlówka" house



In the late 1890s modernist painters from Cracow, fascinated with folk culture, discovered the nearby village of Bronowice. In 1890 Włodzimierz Tetmajer married Anna Mikołajczykówna, a daughter of a local farmer, and settled down in the house, later called Rydlówka.

In a cottage near Cracow belonging to the famous poet Włodzimierz Tetmajer a wedding ceremony of poet Lucjan Rydel and Jadwiga Mikołajczykówna, a younger sister of the host's wife, was held on 20 November 1900. Stanisław Wyspiański, an outstanding poet and playwright, stood there leaning against the door frame all the night, "wearing a black buttoned-up frock coat and staring with his steely, terrifying eyes". A few months later, on 16 March 1901, in a Cracow theatre there was a premiere of a play that stunned the spectators, especially those who could see themselves among the characters.

The cottage in Bronowice, bought by the married couple from Tetmajer in 1912, has aroused much interest since then. A daughter and granddaughter of Lucjan Rydel lived there after World War II and agreed to establish a museum of Polish Modernism in the house. The museum was opened on 21 November 1969. Visitors can see memorials of the guests present at the famous wedding ceremony. Also, books by Wyspiański from the library of Rydel with the author's dedications, paintings by Włodzimierz Tetmajer, a library of Józefa Singer and a dowry trunk of Jadwiga Mikołajczykówna.



The room in which the wedding ceremony took place, at the same time the scene of the drama by Wyspiański: "Over the door a huge painting of Mary from Ostra Brama in Vilnius [...] and over the bedroom door an equally big painting of Mary from Częstochowa [...] The wooden ceiling is made of straight boards with chipped quotations from the Bible and the date of the house".

# BRZEG

## Castle of Silesian Piast family

Initially built in the 13th century, in the following century the castle became a dwelling of the local Silesian rulers. Its impressive look is a result of renovation undertaken in the mid-16th century by Jerzy II, Prince of Legnica and Brzeg, who followed his father, Fryderyk II. Italian architects Jacoppo and Francesco Parra designed the castle and managed the work commissioned by Jerzy II. Some fragments of the western wing and chapel of St. Hedwig have remained from the Gothic part of the castle. The chapel, originally the castle church, was converted into a mausoleum in the 16th century. Only the gate building has remained from the part in the Renaissance style. Statues of the prince and his wife can be seen over the gate. Above, busts of members of the Piast family were set in two rows: in the upper one rulers of Poland, beginning with legendary figures up to the rulers of the era of medieval division, in the lower one independent princes of Silesia, ancestors of Jerzy II. Part of the castle is now the site of the Museum of Silesian Princes.



The gate building resembles a triumphal arch. The proportions of the stone facade follow the rule of golden section, very popular in the times of Renaissance. The height of the statue of Prince Jerzy II was the unit of measure.

Under the rule of Jerzy II the castle in Brzeg, like the royal castle of Wawel in Cracow, attracted numerous scientists and artists.



Prince Jerzy II and his wife - a fragment of decoration of the gate building

# THE CZARNA HAŃCZA

Temperamental river



The Czarna Hańcza near Sobolew

Rafting down the upper course of the Czarna Hańcza is possible only in early spring when there is enough water from the melting snow. This part of the river is especially dangerous for canoers and requires much skill.

This picturesque river in Pojezierze Suwalskie joins two famous lakes, Hańcza and Wigry, and is very popular with canoers. Leaving the Wigry lake, the river changes dramatically: it enters the lowlands near Augustów, where it covers a vast area, meanders in the magnificent forest, passes the tiny village of Rygol and a few kilometres later crosses the Belarussian border. A canoer may also float down Canal Augustowski, designed by General Ignacy Prądzyński and completed in the early 19th century. The route ends in Augustów, where it is suggested tourists visit the house of the famous general, later used as an administrative centre. In the upper course the Czarna Hańcza flows down a narrow and shallow bed, then enters a gorge in steep hills (in some parts of this 47-kilometre-long pass the slope of the bed exceeds 4 degrees). The

unpredictable river is very often blocked. The area was once famous for numerous tobacco plantations, only a few of which remain.

The landscape around the Wigry lake in Pojezierze Suwalskie is dominated by a cloister complex founded in the early 18th century by King Władysław IV for monks of the Camaldolite order, invited there by King Jan Kazimierz in 1667. Cells and farmhouses were built on two terraces. Renovated after World War II damage, the cloister is open for tourists.



# CZARNOLAS

Museum of Jan Kochanowski



In front of the house in Czarnolas a statue of Jan Kochanowski was erected in 1990; the poet is holding a rose in his hands folded behind his back.

To feel the placid atmosphere of the cottage made of larch wood and the sigh of the famous linden tree we must turn to cantos and other poems by Kochanowski, as the house of the poet burnt down in 1720. (Undoubtedly, it had been renovated before the fire). Forty years after the fire, Czarnolas was bought by Prince Józef Aleksander Jabłonowski, whose descendants looked after it with great care. Where the linden tree used to grow, they erected a monument commemorating Piotr Kochanowski, Jan's nephew, and a stone tomb with the name of his beloved daughter and two opening lines of the 18th Lament.

The museum of Jan Kochanowski is in the brick house of the Jabłonowski family, built in the 19th century. Between World Wars I and II Stanisław Zawadzki, the last owner of Czarnolas, collected many mementoes of Kochanowski, but many of them got scattered and lost during World War II. For many years the building was occupied by People University. The first exhibition was opened in

1961, and then changed significantly in 1980. Present visitors can learn about the life and work of Kochanowski depicted against the background of his times. There are only two objects that can actually be traced back to Kochanowski himself – an armchair upholstered with cordovan and a metal door with the Korwin blazon and letters JK. The door is thought to have opened to a treasury destroyed by fire in 1720.

# CZERMNA

## Skull chapel



**T**his intriguing chapel – one of just three in Europe (the other two being in Rome and Kutna Hora in the Czech Republic) – was founded in 1776 by Wacław Tomaszek, a parson of St. Bartholomy parish. After he had settled down in Czerma, Tomaszek decided to go on a pilgrimage to Rome. Near the church of Santa Maria della Conzezione he saw the Capuchin cemetery: five chapels with ornaments made of skulls and bones of monks looking after the temple.

Tomaszek came back to Czerma reflecting on mortality and death. One day he saw dogs digging in the ground around the belltower, uncovering human remains. Helped by undertaker Józef Pflieger and minister Jan Schmidt, he started collecting the skulls and bones of victims of the 17th-century religious wars, the Silesian wars and the epidemics of cholera raging in the area. Shortly after, the parson had a chapel built, gathering together the collected remains. After that he continued his work near Kudowa, Duszniki and Polanica for 18 years and collected the bones in his unique chapel. Statues of two angels are tucked among the skulls arranged along the walls. One (with an epigraph below: "Ressurrect from the dead") is holding a trumpet, the other scales (with the epigraph: "Go to trial"). The skull of the parson is also there (in accordance with his will), exhibited in a showcase together with those of the undertaker and the head of the village Czerma and his wife.

In the ceiling, the walls and the altar there are the remains of about 3,000 dead. Bones of another 21,000 people were buried two metres under the floor.

# CZOCHA

Castle of undiscovered mysteries

**L**ike other fortresses near the Polish and Czech border, this impressive castle, built in the 1240s, often changed hands. In the early 18th century it almost burnt to the ground, so it had to be completely renovated. Late in the 19th century baron Ernst von Gütschow paid a stunning sum for the castle and converted it into a luxury dwelling, where he collected works of art, weapons, and furniture.

During World War II the castle was a strongly defended fortress. As some tiny crystals with pictures and maps of Swiss resorts were found in a chimney, Americans supposed that Germans had carried out experiments with rocket weapons. They were also said to have hidden treasures robbed in Poland during the war. Now the castle is open to tourists, who can admire amongst several attractions a Knight's Room with a secret passage and a Prince's Room with a wardrobe displaying huge mir-

According to legend, an owner of the castle coming back after many years spent away found his wife pregnant. After she had born a child, he decided to subject the wife to ordeal and had her thrown into a well, which she did not survive. Since that time a White Lady has been wandering around the castle and the cry of a new-born baby can be heard.



To get to the main building after passing the gate, visitors have to go over a stone bridge. A portal above the entrance shows the genealogical tree of the owners' family. At the top one can see a statue of Minerva.

rors and a genuine bathroom. Every year in early June a knight's tournament is held and visitors choose the castle princess.



The well of unfaithful wives in the inner courtyard

# BARTEK OAK

Green giant



The name of the most famous Polish oak comes from Bartków near Kielce, where the tree grows.

Though not the oldest, contrary to a popular opinion, Bartek is undoubtedly one of the most famous trees in Poland, having only three other giant oaks to rival with: Lech, Czech and Rus in Rogalin near Poznań. The tree was already mentioned in 19th-century tourist guides and magazines, where it was said to be a contemporary of King Bolesław the Brave. Between World Wars it was even believed to be 1,200 years old. In 1934 distinguished botanist Władysław Szafer presided over the works of a special committee that called Bartek "the most magnificent Polish tree". It was said that tired after hunting, King Bolesław the Wrymouth rested under it, King Kazimierz the Great judged under it, and King Jan III Sobieski coming from Vienna left a bottle of wine, a matchlock and a scimitar in a hollow in the trunk. Modern scientific methods, mainly analyses of samples, verified some legends. According to most recent estimates, Bartek is nearly 660 years old, which makes it a great success story in the polluted

environment of our times. There are no 1,000-year-old oaks in Poland, but it is possible that some grew still in the early 19th century. The age of Chrobry, the oldest Polish oak, is estimated at about 730 years. The oldest Polish tree, however, is not an oak, but a yew growing in Henryków Lubański near Jelenia Góra. The tree is over 1,250 years old, though it is not as impressive as the oldest oaks.

# DEBNO

Knight's castle in late Gothic style



The castle is now the site of the Regional Museum in Tarnów exhibiting old furniture, cutlery and other artefacts showing the everyday life of Polish aristocrats. Tourists can even visit a restored kitchen and a pharmacy.

Built in the second part of the 15th century, the castle is one of the few secular buildings of those times remaining in Poland. It was the dwelling of Jakub from Dębno, who chose a hill where a small stronghold had been before. Bay windows enliven the castle made of red brick. There is a wooden gallery running around the inner courtyard at the first floor level. The gallery enabled communication between the wings of the castle. In the middle of the courtyard there is a well covered with tiles.

The castle belonged to many families, one of them being the Tarłowski, who owned it at the end of the 17th century and at the beginning of the 18th century. It was then that a famous tragedy took place.

The only heiress of the Tarłowski fell in love with a servant and refused to marry the candidate chosen by her parents. The enraged father had her bricked up in a castle niche in a wedding dress.

In the 19th century the castle, folded in the mist of legends, became a favourite motif of painters from Cracow. It was visited by Jan Matejko, who sketched Gothic details, and Julian Fałat from the Cracow School of Art, who painted beautiful watercolours. The castle was often plundered, as treasure seekers hoped to discover the dowry of the lamentable bride-to-be. As late as the years prior to World War II the Jastrzębski family, the last owners of the castle, showed a fair braid – reportedly belonging to the girl condemned to a cruel death...



Concert room

# DĘBNO PODHALAŃSKIE

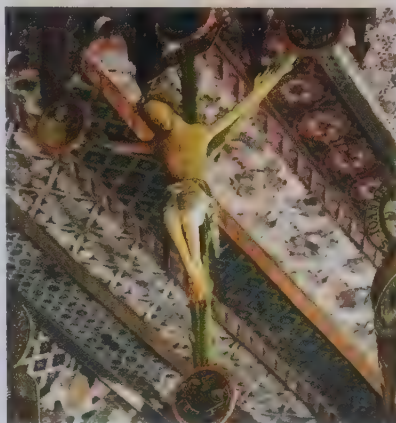
Wooden church from the late 15th century



No nail was used to build the larch-wood Archangel Michael's church – there are only treenails.

The building, unique in the whole world, is protected by UNESCO. It is hard to say whether it is the oldest building of that kind in Poland, but undoubtedly it is the most precious because of the excellent condition of the interior. The ceiling and the walls are covered with paintings made partly in the Middle Ages and partly in the Renaissance period, the only paintings from those times remaining in such good condition. Anonymous painters used leather patterns to repeat in various parallel stripes 70 different motifs, for example griffins, dragons, St. George fighting with a dragon, halberdiers and plant ornaments. The paints are still vivid. They were made from natural ingredients, many of them still remaining a mystery.

The oldest element in the church is a wooden crucifix on a rood arch (from the second half of the 14th century). Two figures made from wood hang on either side – St. John and Mater Dolorosa.



# THE FIVE LAKES VALLEY

The most beautiful valley in the Tatras



The Five Lakes Valley is very popular with trekkers. Following tourist routes, they can get from there to Zawrat Pass, Krzyżne Pass, Szpiglasowa Pass, the lake of Morskie Oko, Roztoka Valley and ascend Kozi Wierch.

**T**he valley, a huge glacial cirque above the tree line, with many smaller valleys, covers an area of over 7 square kilometres. Contrary to its name, there are six lakes in the valley: Przedni, Mały, Wielki, Czarny, Zadni and Wole Oko. There are also two tiny periodical lakes.

Rocks rising above the water and scarce but interesting flora – mainly mosses, lichens and vast grasslands – create a wonderful alpine scenery. The valley can boast many firsts in the Tatras. The shelter by the Przedni Lake is one of the oldest in the range and no other is more elevated (1,671 metres). The Wielki Lake is the deepest (79.3 metres), the most capacious (nearly 13,000 cubic metres) and the biggest Tatra lake, according to some statistics (86 acres), though some argue that Morskie Oko is bigger. The Zadni Lake at an elevation of 1890 metres (surpassed by no other mountain lake) can not be seen from the floor of the valley.

# PRĄDNIK VALLEY

Hercules' Club and other fascinating rocks



The unique shape of Skala Herkulesa (Hercules' Club) is a result of the limestone being of various hardness and eroding at a different pace. According to legend, it was a devil that brought the club and stuck the butt in the ground, demanded by Twardowski, a famous wizard.

**T**he longest and the most beautiful of a dozen Jurassic sea valleys near Cracow is famous mainly for the picturesque rock of Hercules' Club, over 20 metres high. The valley, especially interesting for naturalists, became The Ojcowski National Park in 1956. Shells of mussels, sea urchins and other creatures living there in the Jurassic sea made a layer of lime on the seabed. Soft lime, raised to the surface after geological changes, was eroded by water and winds for millions of years and created this unique landscape: lonely rocks of unusual shapes, rock gates, cracks spouting water, and most notably caves, about 200 in number. King Władysław the Elbow High is said to have

used one as a shelter, when hiding from Vaclav II, a Czech ruler invading Poland. These days the caves are inhabited mainly by bats. 15 species out of 21 recorded in Poland live there, so a bat was chosen as a symbol of the Park.

# FROMBORK

Fortified cathedral



The turret forming a part of the wall has been called The Copernicus' Tower since the 17th century. It is commonly regarded as the dwelling and study of the outstanding astronomer.



The cathedral, one of the most exceptional monuments of sacred Gothic architecture in this part of Europe, was built in sixty years (1329-1388), amazingly quick in those times. Located on a high hill, it was planned to be a fortress as well. Gates, moats, drawbridges and brick walls with high towers from which defenders could open fire served as protection for centuries.

Few of the original temple items have remained. Most works of art and Copernicus' library were stolen during the Swedish invasion in the 17th century. A five-wing altar in late Gothic style (made in 1505), commissioned by Łukasz Watzenrode, the famous astronomer's uncle, is one of the most precious monuments. Initially the main altar, it was later moved to an aisle. Copernicus' remains were laid in the church, but the exact place is unknown. When he died, few knew of his astronomical studies. His name became famous later and a memorial plaque was created, but at that time nobody could say where his body had been buried. It has been suggested that the body was buried near the altar that he had looked after as a canon.

# GDAŃSK

## Church of the Virgin Mary



The skyline in Gdańsk is dominated by the massive tower of the church. Ascending over 400 steps to watch the city from the tower is worth the toil.

**I**t took nearly 160 years to build the church, regarded as the biggest brick temple in Europe (1343-1502). Although there were only about 30,000 inhabitants in Gdańsk then, as many as 25,000 people can gather in the church. The impressive and light interior is filled with rows of stunningly high pillars supporting the complex vaulting, with stellar, net and ribbed vaulting styles in different places. Very few of numerous precious works of art were not destroyed in 1945 during the assault of the Soviet army, but the remaining works are masterpieces, for instance *The Day of Judgement* by Hans Memling and *Fair Madonna*, a stone Gothic sculpture.

In the 15th century there were 124 priests serving in the parish. The parsons – even when the church belonged to protestants – were appointed by Polish kings. No less honourable and well-paid was the post of a conductor. A letter written by Bach in 1730 has survived, where the great composer asked a friend to find out about the possibilities of being granted the position.

*The Day of Judgement*, one of the most precious works of foreign art in Polish collections, was stolen in 1473 from a ship heading for Italy by privateers from Gdańsk. The owners, a Florentine banker and his wife, shown on the wings of the triptych, demanded it back, but in vain.



Hans Memling: *The Day of Judgement* (the central part)

# GDAŃSK

## Royal Road

**D**ługi Targ (Long Market) and Długa Street (Long Street) together form Trakt Królewski (Royal Road). In the street tourists can see the two most important secular buildings of the Main City in Gdańsk: the town hall and Artus Court. The former was built in the 14th century with many alterations implemented later. The inner part of the building, a display of the city's wealth, was one of the most impressive interiors in Northern Europe. The perfect location of Gdańsk, at the mouth of the Martwa Wisła and at the amber route running across Europe from the north to the south, stimulated trade and economic growth. The city was granted numerous royal privileges securing the prosperity of traders and city dwellers. The City Council Room, also called the Red Room because of the upholstery covering the walls, is the most beautiful room in the town hall. The ceiling covered with 25 paintings and a fireplace from 1593 are the oldest items in the room. In a tower built from the late 15th century to the early 16th century there is a clock with a carillon consisting of 14 bells.

The origins of Artus Court also date back to the Middle Ages. In cities, notably ports, it was a custom to build luxury houses where wealthy citizens could meet, following the lifestyle of aristocrats. As an icon they took King Arthur and his knights sitting at the round table. Already a hundred years after its completion, Artus Court belonged to traders from Gdańsk. For many centuries it was a city centre of social and business life.



Artus Court and a fountain of Neptune

The fountain of Neptune is the oldest secular monument in Poland. The bronze statue of the seagod was cast in 1615, and the fountain completed 17 years later. Sailors came to it to give thanks for a happy return home. According to legend, at one time the famous "golden" vodka from Gdańsk (Goldwasser) squirted from the trident. Neptune got angry and made the fountain squirt with water back when innkeepers began to collect it in cellars.



The Crane

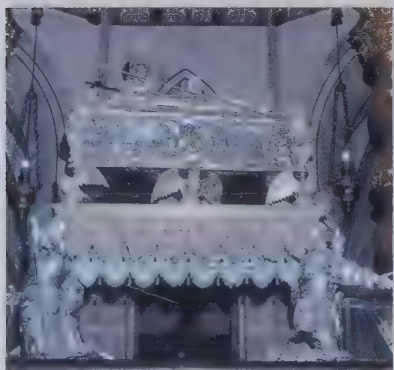
A medieval crane tucked between two towers at Długie Pobrzeże (Long Bank) facing the Motława was both a crane and a city gate. The wooden drums inside the crane were moved by workers walking inside them to pull goods up. Two tons could be pulled up as high as 27 metres.

# GNIEZNO

Cathedral with St. Adalbert's relics

The three-aisle church is famous for many precious monuments (e.g. the tomb of Primate Zbigniew Oleśnicki made by Veit Stoss in 1495). After a fire in 1945 it was renovated with the intention of restoring the Gothic features of the church from the 14th century (the remains of the previous buildings can be seen in the basements). The nave and aisles are surrounded by fourteen chapels, most of them in Gothic style. Of the baroque chapels, one was designed in 1727 by Pompeo Ferrari, who was commissioned by archbishop Teodor Potocki. Ferrari, a famous architect, worked in many sites in Wielkopolska. In the portal of the cathedral in Gniezno there is one of the most precious Romanesque monuments in Poland: a bronze door from the late 12th century. The door is a unique source of information about the life and habits of those times. The scenes from the door depict the story of the life and death of St. Adalbert. Like Dobrava, the wife of Mieszko I, who was the first Christian ruler of Poland, St. Adalbert was buried in the basement.

A silver coffin from 1662 with relics of St. Adalbert is displayed under the canopy in the middle of the presbytery. In 1986 there was a daring and mysterious theft and the tomb was partly destroyed. A year later it was renovated.



Two massive towers of the cathedral are crowned with baroque spires. The interior of the church is equally impressive: it is 85 metres long and the nave is 22 metres high.

# GOLUB-DOBRZYŃ

Castle of princess royal Anna Waza



After the death of Anna Waza the massive brick castle was adorned with a magnificent Renaissance attic.



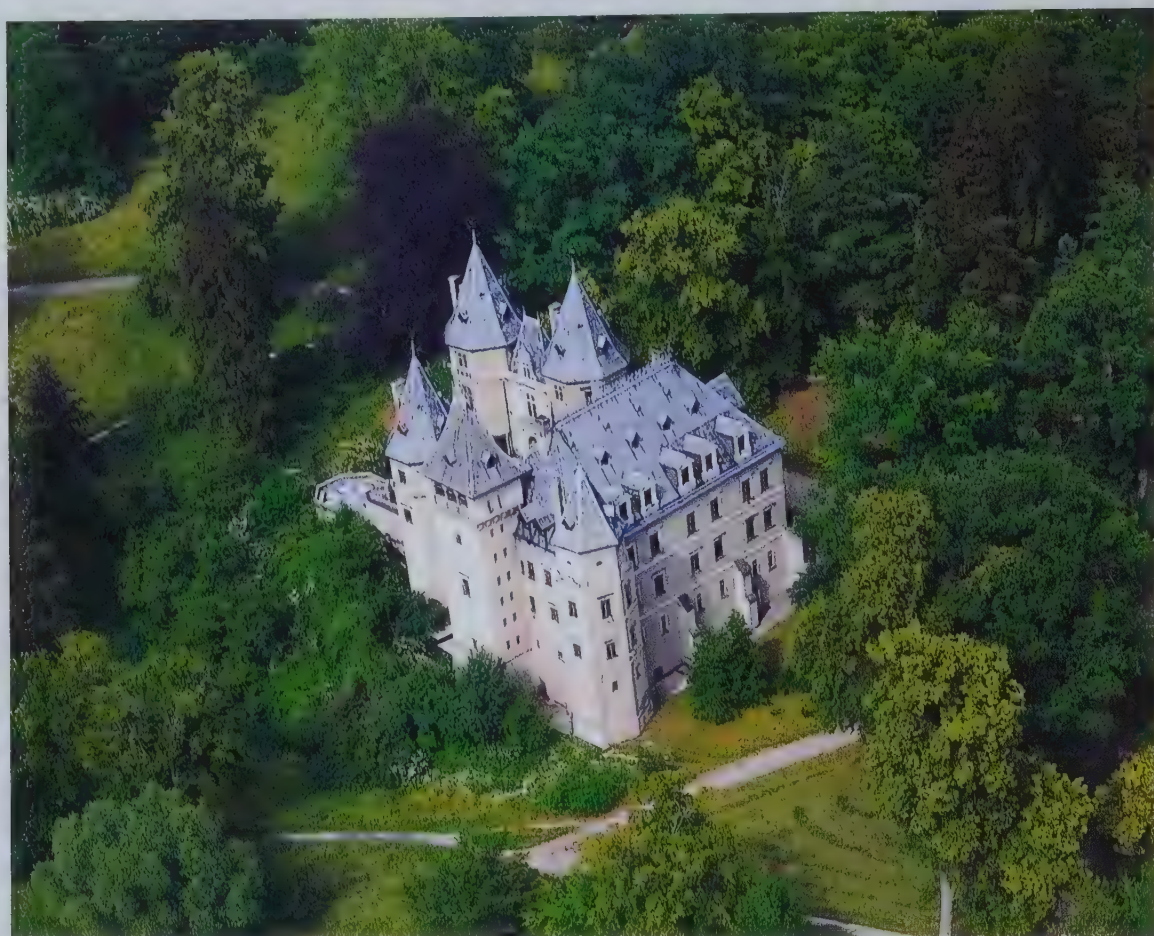
Every year spectacular knight tournaments attract many tourists to Golub-Dobrzyń.

Built at the end of the 13th and at the beginning of the 14th centuries, the castle was a dwelling of the Komtur, or local commander in the Teutonic state. After the treaty of peace between the order and Poland had been signed in 1466, the castle was in Poland. The region was administered by authorities appointed by King of Poland. In 1611 King Zygmunt III Waza gave the castle to his younger sister Anna, a thoroughly educated and enlightened woman, who generously supported scientists, and was interested especially in botany and medicine. She made a magnificent garden on the southern slope of the castle hill where she grew rare plants and analysed their medicinal properties, using selfmade treatments to cure courtmen and serfs. She also rebuilt the castle in the years 1616-1623 in the Renaissance style.

After her death the castle declined and it was ruined after 1867. A complete renovation was done in the years 1959-1969. In the castle rooms visitors can see old furniture, weapons and armoury from the era of the Grunwald battle along with property used during the production of *Potop* by Jerzy Hoffman, a film about the Swedish invasion in the 17th century.

# GOŁUCHÓW

Dwelling of famous families of Wielkopolska



A great attraction of Gołuchów, apart from the castle, are the bison bred since 1977 near the biggest landscape park in Poland.

In Gołuchów tourists can see a castle built in the French Renaissance style, as if it had been brought from near the banks of the Loire, which is not common in Poland. The present shape of the building is a result of renovations made in the years 1872-1885. The previous castle, initially belonging to the Leszczyński family, often changed hands and ultimately was ruined. Tytus Działyński, owner of Kórnik, bought it in 1853. A few years later Jan Kanty, his only son, settled down in a small, renovated part of the castle with his wife, Princess Izabela Czartoryska, a daughter of the outstanding statesman and diplomat Adam Jerzy Czartoryski. After Jan Kanty Działyński took part in a revolt

against Russia in 1863 and had to emigrate after the defeat, Gołuchów belonged to his wife. Izabela Czartoryska was very interested in the arts and brought excellent architects, sculptors and interior designers from France. Under her watchful eye they renovated the castle, completing decorations remaining from the times of the Leszczyńskis, such as fireplaces, with genuine Renaissance artifacts bought by Princess Izabela in French and Italian antique shops. The luxurious interior was a fine background for works of art including an extremely valuable collection of antique pottery.

A private museum was established by Princess Izabela and was open to the general public until 1939. Most exhibits were stolen during the German occupation, and the interior was destroyed. In 1951 the castle was taken over by the Muzeum Narodowe (National Museum) in Poznań. In 1956 the Soviet Union returned part of the collection that was illicitly stolen by the Russians from Germany. After the necessary renovations had been made, it was reopened in 1962. The famous pottery came back as well, but they were taken to the Narodowe Muzeum (National Museum) in Warsaw. 56 of them, however, have been moved recently to the castle where they were collected by Izabela.

# THE STOŁOWE MOUNTAINS

Rock maze



Błędne Skały (The Vicious Rocks)

Sometimes it is very hard for a backpacker to follow narrow and winding corridors in beautiful rock formations. Rainwater stays for a long time in gloomy corridors.

Apeman, Hen, Elephant, Telly, Sheep, Armchair – to list just a few rock formations of many mentioned in legends and folk stories.



Apeman – a rock formation in Szczeliniec Wielki

The only Polish slab mountains, made of successive layers of marl and sandstone, the range of the Stołowe Mountains has been a national park since 1993 to protect unique rock formations, resulting from erosion. As tradition puts it, the name of the range (The Table Mountains) commemorates a great table put there at the beginning of the 19th century during a feast in honour of von Hoym, a Prussian governor of Silesia.

There are a few nature reserves in the Stołowe Mountains, the most famous one being the peak of Szczeliniec Wielki, the highest elevation in the Polish part of the range (919 metres), famous for its characteristic flat shape, visible from a long distance. Błędne Skały (Vicious Rocks; 852 metres) form a maze of corridors and narrow passages, which is a great tourist attraction. Another unique place is Wielkie Torfowisko Batorowskie (The Great Batorowskie Peat Bog) with numerous species of marsh flora.

One must also mention Sawanna Łężycka (The Łężycka Savannah, called also Kłodzka or African) covering an area of two square kilometres and famous for lush meadow flora and umbrella-shaped pines between scattered solitary rocks. It is also worth seeing Skalne Grzyby (Rock Mushrooms), owing their shape to different pace of erosion.

# GRABARKA

Sacred place of Orthodox Christians



The 18th-century Orthodox church in Grabarka was a unique monument, but it burnt down completely in 1990 after arson. The new church is a replica of the old one, but it is built of brick and only the outer walls are panelled with wood.

A destination for numerous pilgrimages, Grabarka is the most important place for Orthodox Christians in Poland. It is also called "The Orthodox Częstochowa". Święta Góra (Holy Mountain) is the site of the church and a female monastery, established in 1947. Both places are surrounded by forest. A most impressive sight are the thousands of huge and tiny crosses, many of which are bearing inscriptions with prayers, thanks and requests. Following an old tradition, some of them are wrapped with embroidered linen towels or ribbons. Every year on Saviour's Day, or Lord's Transfiguration (August 19th, or 6th in the Orthodox calendar), pilgrims bring new crosses to stick them in the ground. There are about 7,000 (some argue the number is even 10,000), so other names of the sanctuary at Grabarka are the Hill of Expiators or the Hill of Crosses.

The origins of the sanctuary are connected with a plague raging in 1710. According to legend, an inhabitant of nearby Siemiatycze was told how to save people in a dream. The dwellers were

to leave the town, go to the forest and find a source of crystal-clear water. Those who did this escaped a terrifying death. Soon after, a temple of the Greek Catholic Church (also known as the Uniate Church) was built on the hill. Already in the 18th century it was a destination of Catholic pilgrims. Since 1839, when Russian authorities cancelled the union, Grabarka has been an Orthodox sanctuary.

# THE RADUNIA RAVINE

Gloomy realm of mysteries



The Radunia

A canoe guide recommends that "every canoer paddling down the river for the first time can justifiably feel like a great, heroic discoverer, as the place itself is unique not only in Pomerania, but also in Poland".

**T**wilight, fallen trees, rapids and sharp turns are the attractions awaiting those who decide to paddle down the legendary stretch of the Radunia called the Babidolski Gorge, the Radunia Gorge or the Radunia Ravine. The 10-kilometre-long stretch starts at the village Somonino. In the upper course the river is tamed by the same glacial valley it followed in the postglacial period. Then the Radunia meanders across meadows at the foot of the Szymbarskie Hills. Afterwards, having passed Somonino, the river flows more rapidly, as it enters a deep ravine with slopes covered by dense forest. There, the Radunia becomes a typical mountain river, with the slope of the bed as high as 5 degrees. It poses a serious challenge, even for confirmed canoers. Hornbeams, beeches and meadows in narrow ravines leading to the Ravinia gorge were already studied in the 19th century by German and Polish botanists, who recorded many interesting flora species there. The Radunia Ravine is a nature reserve. Below Żukowo there are reservoir lakes where the water moves the turbines of six power plants.



A maritagon lily

Near the banks of the Radunia one can admire wonderful ferns and many other interesting plants, like the yellowish globeflower, the yellow flag or the maritagon lily. On the riverbed there are freshwater mussels *Anodonta cygnaea* L. and the common river mussel, the only one in Poland that produces pearls.

# THE RAJ CAVE

The most beautiful cave in Poland



Thousands of stalactites (over 200 per square metre) make a great impression when lit from below. On the floor there are stalagmites and groups of incrustations in intriguing forms, such as the so-called "Pagoda".

Every year more than 100,000 tourists visit the cave to admire the unusual forms of the encrusted deposits. The fabulous cave was discovered by chance by the inhabitants of a nearby village in 1963. In 1965 bars were put up to prevent destruction. Exploring the cave, scientists discovered that it had been occupied 50-60,000 years ago. They also found bones of animals such as bears, bison, mammoths and musk oxen (*Ovibos moschatus*). Seven years later the cave was opened to tourists. There are several chambers in the cave. The gallery, protecting the microclimate of the cave, leads to Komora Wstępna (the Antechamber), and then to the biggest chamber, called Sala Złomisk (the Chamber of Brash), where one can see enormous rocks that fell off the ceiling thousands of years ago and have been covered by deposit. The Harp, a semitransparent column, is especially interesting. Sala Kolumnowa (the Column Chamber), connected to

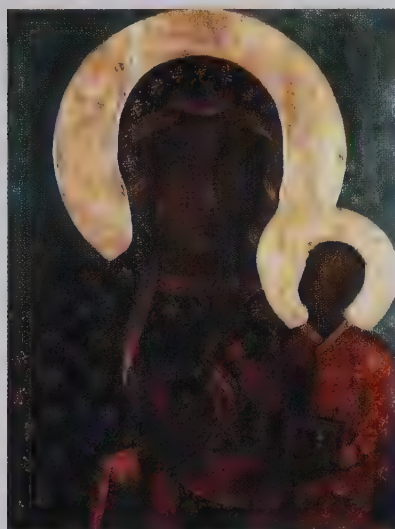
the Chamber of Brash with a long and narrow passage, is famous for beautiful rock formations, such as the so-called rice fields and cave pearls in the lakes on the floor of the chamber. A route over a small bridge leads to the Stalactite Chamber full of incrustations in various stages of development. We are then led to the High Chamber and the exit. One of the corridors is strictly protected and tourists are not allowed to visit it.

# JASNA GÓRA

The sanctuary of the Virgin Mary in Częstochowa



Jasna Góra is famous for many reasons: there is not only the painting widely renowned for miracles, but also an arsenal with an exhibition of weapons, such as those won by King Jan III Sobieski after defeating the Turks, a museum of the history of the cloister, and a treasury. From the ramparts one can see the monumental stations of the Way of the Cross.

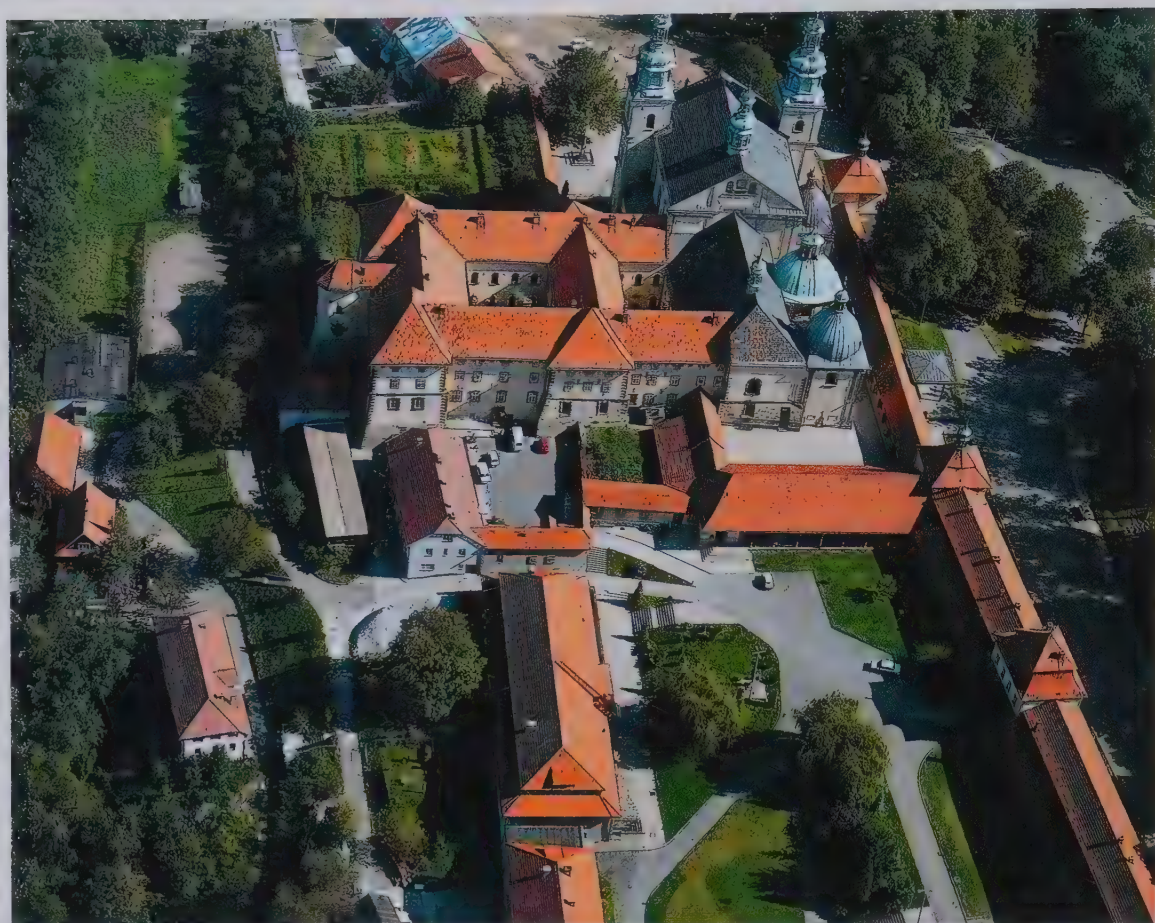


There are two views as to the date of the miraculous painting. Some argue it was painted in the Byzantium period, the 6th or 7th century. Others say it was painted in the 13th century in Italy.

The Pauline cloister on Jasna Góra is one of the most important Polish sanctuaries. It resisted a Swedish siege in 1655, Russian assaults in 1771, and survived almost untouched through both World Wars. It was built in the 15th century and some parts of the Gothic walls have remained. Thoroughly rebuilt in the early 17th century, the cloister was surrounded by massive fortifications, which saved it from capture by the Swedes, and protected by four gates. The chapel of the Virgin Mary is the most important destination for thousands of believers visiting the sanctuary. Apart from the miraculous painting, crowned in 1717 and set in a beautiful altar made of ebony and silver, there is also a golden rose donated by John Paul II during his pilgrimage to Poland in 1979. The walls of the chapel are decorated with numerous votive objects brought by pilgrims. In a colonnade in the Renaissance style one can see a copy of a painting by Matejko – *Vows of Jan Kazimierz*. The painting shows a scene in the cathedral in Lvov, where in 1656 the Virgin Mary from Częstochowa was proclaimed Queen of Poland and Lithuania. In the church next to the chapel, a basilica minor, visitors can admire paintings by outstanding Swedish painter Karl Dankwart, made at the end of the 17th century.

# KALWARIA ZEBRZYDOWSKA

Polish Jerusalem



The cloister complex

The church of Angel Madonna and the Bernardine cloister have perfect proportions. The cloister was rebuilt in the 17th century. The renovation, which took a whole century, was directed by Giovanni Bernardoni from Italy and Paul Baudarth from Flanders. For that reason two different architectural styles are clearly discernible.

It was the first Calvary, or monumental Way of the Cross, built in Poland. Mikołaj Zebrzydowski, a regional administrator, influenced by a book describing Jerusalem in the time of Christ, decided to build the Way of Passion near Lanckorona.

Near the stations of the Way of the Cross many chapels were built, mostly in the years 1605-1611. They are dedicated to the Virgin Mary and many saints. The main designer, Flemish architect and jeweller Paul Baudarth, implemented many inventive architectural ideas. For instance, Caiaphas' House is elliptical in shape, the oldest Polish example of such a construction, and the Chapel of the Virgin Mary's Heart has the shape of a heart. Baudarth also used many manneristic and baroque decorations.

The sacred complex is dominated by a church with a cloister of the Bernardine order, built in the years 1605-1609. A magnificent chapel was added to the church in 1667. Visitors can see a painting of the Madonna with Child there. The painting was funded by the Paszkowski family and in a very short time it became famous for many miracles.



Every year during Holy Week thousands of pilgrims and inhabitants of nearby villages and towns take part in a unique staging, recollecting the Passion, death and resurrection of Christ. The Passion in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska is one of the oldest mysteries in Poland.

# THE KARKONOSZE MOUNTAINS

Amazing rocks, precipices and waterfalls



The Bazyłowe Rocks

Throughout the entire range trekkers can find fabulous granite rock groups, the effect of the erosion of granite.

**T**he Karkonosze, composed of granite, is the highest range in the Sudetes chain. Śnieżka is the highest elevation of this 36-kilometre-long range (1602 metres), and only there and on Wielki Szyszak (1509 metres) – the second highest peak of the Karkonosze – there is a layer of alpine flora. For a botanist, the most interesting aspect is the subalpine layer (1250-1450 metres), where one can find the dwarf mountain pine, herbs, grass and peat-moors.

Postglacial cirques are a characteristic element of the landscape of the Karkonosze, the most beautiful one being Śnieżne Kotły with a 200-metre-high precipice and snow remaining for the entire year.

Due to steep slopes and faults there are numerous waterfalls. The greatest are Łomniczka with a 300-metre-wide cascade, Szklarski (13 metres high), and Kamieniczka (27 metres high, the highest waterfall in the Polish part of the range). In 1992 the Karkonosze National Park and its Czech counterpart (the whole range covers an area of 617 square kilometres, while the Polish part only 177 square kilometres) were included in the Bilateral Biosphere Reserve Karkonosze/Krkonoše by UNESCO.

The cirque of the Mały Staw lake with Samotnia, one of the most beautiful mountain hostels.



# KARPACZ

Temple Wang (Vang)



The temple Wang was built at the end of the 13th and the beginning of the 14th centuries in a small village Vang (now Grindaheim) in the south of Norway. In the 19th century the temple became too small for the inhabitants of Vang, so John Christian Dahl from Norway, who was a professor of the Dresden Art Academy, organised an auction and sold the sacred building. The money gained in this way was used to build a new church. The temple was bought by the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm IV, who intended to situate it on Peacock Island in Berlin, where he had collected a few monuments of wooden architecture before. In 1841 the building was pulled down and transported in carts to Bergen. Then, the components were taken to Szczecin by sea and finally to Berlin.

All the components of the temple were then assembled in the Royal Museum in Berlin. Finally, following the advice of Countess Juliana von Redden, the Royal Minister's widow, the building was given to

The Temple Wang, built of Norwegian pine, and very durable thanks to an abundance of resin, is a fine example of the old Scandinavian way of building wooden churches (stavkirke). Unique bas-reliefs on portals and pillars, showing dramatic tangles of plants, snakes, mythological creatures and human faces with forked tongues, are especially interesting. The roof of the temple is crowned with a characteristic element of Viking boats – the open mouths of dragons.

protestants living near Karpacz. It was assembled near Czarna Góra at the elevation of 885 metres. The reconstruction took two years (1842-1844).

# KAZIMIERZ DOLNY

Charming town on the Vistula



It is worth climbing one of the nearby hills, for instance Góra Trzech Krzyży, to admire Kazimierz.



A bas-relief showing St. Christopher on the facade of a 16th-century house of Krzysztof Przybył.

A town full of magic, attracting many visitors. The picturesque landscape and magnificent monuments of Kazimierz Dolny were already famous in the 19th century. Famous painters visited it, for example Leon Wyczółkowski and Józef Pankiewicz, whose paintings created in Kazimierz are regarded as the first works of Polish impressionism. Between World Wars, students of the Warsaw School of Art regularly travelled to the town to paint or sketch. Today you can also meet, especially in the town market, young people drawing the interesting houses built in the Renaissance style or the nearby hills. The town is on the Vistula, which used to be the main waterroute for transporting grain. This was the main reason for the prosperity of the inhabitants. A glance at the richly decorated houses from the 16th and 17th centuries is enough to leave no doubts. Two twin houses in the market, belonging once to Krzysztof and Mikołaj Przybył, are amongst the most precious buildings in Poland. A parish church is also a unique monument. The building was decorated with delicate stuccos resembling needle-lace, which was typical for the Renaissance style of areas near Lublin. The organ, made in 1620, is the oldest of the few that have remained untouched (only the bellows have been replaced). Along the river bank one can see several beautiful brick granaries from the 16th and 17th centuries. Most of them have been converted into hotels or restaurants. Their ornamented facades, usually covered with white plaster at the top, are a characteristic feature of the town that can boast a skyline unchanged by the uniform blocks built during the period of the communist regime.

# KOZŁÓWKA

## The Zamoyski family Museum



The palace in Kozłówka was built in the 18th century for Michał Bieliński, Aurora Rutkowski's widower. Aurora was an illegitimate daughter of August II and a Turkish girl Fatima. The palace was reconstructed between 1879 and 1908 for the last time.

One of the few aristocratic residences in Poland that has weathered historical storms in the shape designed by the original owners. The Museum of the Zamoyskis boasts the largest Polish collection of works of art and artistic crafts from the 19th and early 20th centuries. Curtains and fifty (!) huge mirrors are unique as in other Polish palaces they were damaged during World War II and the communist regime. Visitors are invariably impressed by the collection of nearly 1,000 paintings hanging almost everywhere. Here are fine replicas of famous European canvases, collected by Konstanty Zamoyski (1846-1923). This "handsome man with exceptional manners and a sense of humour" looked after his palace with meticulous care. According to an anecdote, having commissioned excellent stove tiles in Meissen, he had the moulds destroyed so that nobody could order the same tiles. He also liked giving organ concerts in the palace chapel. He sat at the organ with a cigar in his mouth and played perforated rolls with recorded music.

After World War II Kozłówka was taken over by the state and became the Central Museum Warehouse. Collected works are exhibited in the biggest Polish gallery of socialist realism. Giant sculptures from the communist period are displayed in the park surrounding the palace. There is, for instance, a monument of

President Bolesław Bierut, moved there from Lublin.



Fabulous richly decorated interior of the Zamoyskis' residence.

A bedroom

# KÓRNIK

White Lady's residence



The romantic castle is surrounded by the largest dendrological park in Poland, full of exotic trees and bushes (about 3,000 species).

The Moresque Room is one of the most beautiful rooms in the castle.



The residence, built in the neo-Gothic English style and surrounded by a picturesque moat and a wonderful park, was previously a dwelling of the Górka family. It was rebuilt in 1843-1861, designed by Karl Friedrich Shinkel, the most excellent German architect of Romanticism. Count Tytus Działyński, Polish art collector and patriot (he took part in the rebel against Russia organised in November, 1830), and former owner of Kórnik, used most rooms to exhibit national mementoes and works of art. The count was also a bibliophile, and thanks to him Kórnik has one of the most priceless collections of books and manuscripts in Poland, with such unique items as signatures of Polish kings, a manuscript of the third part of *Dziady* by Adam Mickiewicz and Napoleon's description of his campaign in Italy. Jan Kanty, the count's son, and later Władysław Zamoyski, his nephew, continued the efforts of Tytus Działyński. They added brilliant pieces from Madagascar, Australia and Polynesia. In his will from 1924, Władysław Zamoyski established the foundation "Zakłady Kórnickie" and gave all his riches to the nation. Visitors should have a look at a huge portrait of one of the owners of Kórnik – Teofila Szoldrska-Potulicka (1714-1790). She is the famous White Lady that is said to stroll in the park on gloomy nights.

# CRACOW

Barbican (Barbakan)



The word 'barbican' comes from Arabic and describes a circular stronghold. The name has been used to describe the part of Cracow's fortifications since the mid-19th century. In older documents it is called the Floriańska Gate. It was used not only to protect the town, but it also played a representational role as it was the gate where rulers or commanders returning home were officially greeted.

**T**he Cracow barbican is the biggest and best-preserved building of that kind in Poland. A similar one can be seen in Carcassonne in France, but it was renovated, while the barbican in Cracow has not been altered for five centuries.

The barbican (also called the Pot) was built during the reign of King Jan Olbracht. It was the outermost part of the city fortifications and was the first line of defence against the assaults of invaders. The construction of the building, designed by an anonymous architect, proves that medieval builders mastered ancient crafts and arts. The walls are three metres thick. Even if invaders had managed to force the wall and escape streams of hot water and tar poured from the top of the walls, they would still have had to cross the moat and seven solid gates strengthened with iron and falling iron bars.

At the beginning of the 19th century Austrian Emperor Franz II ordered most of the medieval buildings in Cracow pulled down. Architect Feliks Radwański, a senator of the Cracow Republic and professor at the Jagiellon University, convinced the authorities that pulling down the barbican and adjacent buildings would

open the city to winds and blizzards, which would cause many diseases. Thanks to him the barbican, Brama Floriańska (a city gate) and part of city walls survived.

# CRACOW

## Wawel Cathedral



The chapels surrounding the cathedral were built since the 16th century. They were funded by kings, bishops and aristocrats. The most famous is the chapel funded by King Zygmunt I the Old (Kaplica Zygmuntowska), a masterpiece of Polish Renaissance architecture. Golden scales cover the dome.

The cathedral is a very important thread in the fabric of Polish history. Almost all Polish kings were crowned there, beginning from Władysław the Elbow High. In the middle of the temple, where the aisle and the transept cross, at the confession of St. Stanisław, King Władysław Jagiełło laid the flags won during the battle against the army of the Teutonic order near Grunwald, and King Jan III Sobieski the flag won near Vienna in the battle against the Turks. Almost all Polish kings were buried in the cathedral. At the time when Poland was divided between three occupiers the remains of national heroes were laid in the church as well: Józef Poniatowski (1817), Tadeusz Kościuszko, and in the 20th century the ashes of Józef Piłsudski and Władysław Sikorski. There is a special place devoted to the memory of national bards. On 24 September 2001 an urn with soil from a collective tomb in Montmorency in France was laid in the Crypt of Poets. Cyprian Kamil Norwid, one of the greatest Polish poets, was buried in this tomb.



"Zygmunt" bell

The bell funded by King Zygmunt I the Old, cast in 1520, weighs about 11 tons. The bell tolls during major state and church ceremonies. According to a folk tradition, it disperses clouds and brings sunny weather. People used to believe that a girl touching the clapper of the bell would soon get married, and if it was touched by a married woman, it guaranteed happiness.

# CRACOW

Kazimierz



The Old Synagogue



The wall of Remuh cemetery with the symbol of hands raised to bless

There are many interesting tombs from the 16th century in the cemetery near the Remuh synagogue. The stalls display symbols that were used to decorate tombs, such as hands raised to bless (to symbolise a priest's tomb), bowls and jars symbolising washing one's hands (used to identify members of the Levi tribe) or a snake (symbolising a doctor).

The present shape of the Old Synagogue is a result of renovation done after a fire in 1557 shortly after the building had been built. The roof was then raised and a one-storey adjacent building was built. It was a prayer room for women, who were considered polluted and were not allowed to enter the synagogue. Places designed especially for women allowed them fulfil religious duties.

**K**azimierz, once called European Jerusalem, was the intellectual capital of Polish Jews. Szeroka Street was the main part of the town, which is now a district in Cracow. It is there that the Old Synagogue was built. As late as 1930s a special prayer was recited there for King Kazimierz the Great, who located the town and was a benefactor and protector of Polish Jews. Now in the Old Synagogue there is a section of the Historical Museum where visitors can see an exhibition devoted to traditions and art of Polish Jews.

Nearby there is a synagogue called Remuh, which is still used. The specific character of the place is a result of many richly decorated cult objects. The name of the synagogue comes from the name of Mojżesz Isserles, who was called Rabbi Moses-Remuh. His tomb is a destination for many Jews coming from around the world to pray and tuck a piece of paper with a request on it in the cracks between the stones. The tomb is in the cemetery near the synagogue. The necropolis is one of the oldest Jewish cemeteries in Europe. Deceased Jews were buried there as early as the second half of the 16th century.

# CRACOW

## The Church of the Virgin Mary

When *hejnał* (a trumpet tune signalling when to open and close the city gate) is sounded, everybody looks up at the tower of the Church of the Virgin Mary, the second most important church in Cracow (surpassed only by the cathedral). Everybody notices the lack of symmetry, as the basilica (the name was granted by Pope Jan XXIII in 1962) stands obliquely to the axis of the market, because it was built before the city was located. 2.6 metres below the floor of the present church there are the remains of a Romanesque church. Two towers differing in height are the most characteristic features of the building. The higher one (81 metres) is more richly decorated and used to be a watchtower. The lower one was a campanile.



It took twelve years to complete the huge Gothic polyptych made from linden tree. The motif depicted in the central part is the Virgin Mary's Quiescent, and the wings are decorated with scenes from Jesus' and Mary's lives.



As legend has it, the two towers were built by two brothers. The older one finished the work first, but he noticed that the second tower had firmer foundations and could be made higher, which would have made his competitor more famous. He killed the brother and quickly finished work. Soon after, he committed suicide, tormented by remorse.

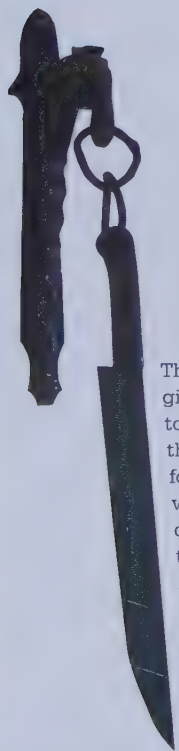
In the dark, Gothic interior of the church there are many wonderful baroque altars. The aisle, 81 metres long and 28 metres high, is decorated with fine polychromies by Jan Matejko. The most valuable piece of art in the church is the main altar made by Veit Stoss.

# CRACOW

The Cloth Hall



For ages this place has been a trade center and many ceremonies took place there. In 1525 Albrecht Hohenzollern, commander of the Teutonic order, paid homage to Zygmunt Stary as his lands became a secular part of Poland. It was also there that in 1794 Tadeusz Kościuszko swore a solemn oath to the Polish nation.



The big iron knife hanging in a corridor used to be a reminder to thieves, and was used for cutting ears, which was the standard medieval punishment for theft. One of Cracow's legends says that one of the brothers building the Church of the Virgin Mary used just this knife to kill the brother that had built a higher tower.

The place in Market Square that is now full of souvenir stalls was in the 13th century a street between two rows of stone stalls. King Bolesław the Chaste promised to fund the stalls in his privilege when he was locating the town. At night the street was closed at both ends with gratings.

A brick house in the Gothic style was built there by King Kazimierz the Great in 1358, but it burnt down 200 years later. A few masters toiled at the reconstruction of the building in the mid-16th century. A barrel vault was built over the main hall, and two balconies were added to the upper floor, to the northern and southern walls. At the same time another floor was built. Because of the constant clatter of talkative vendors the place is called "smatrutz" (from the German verb *schmettern*).

Nearly 150 years ago the building was completely renovated. The work was supervised by Tomasz Pryliński. Stalls and booths adjacent to the building were pulled down, and the columns were decorated with sculpted heads. Some of them were made by Jan Matejko. The smatrutz was converted into a gallery of the National Museum. Now there is a gallery of 19th-century Polish paintings and sculpture. In the hall downstairs wooden stalls, also designed by Matejko, were put in. The 19th-century character of the building has not changed.

# CRACOW

## Royal Castle of Wawel



The castle courtyard



The tapestry (arras) entitled A fox devouring a bird and a rabbit.

On the ground floor of the castle there were rooms devoted to household work, the rooms on the first floor were private apartments, and the rooms on the second floor were used for official meetings. It was there that feasts, meetings of the royal council and state visits took place. The rooms on the second floor were twice as high as those on the other floors, in order to create a more grandiose background for official ceremonies. That is why all the pillars on the second floor are much higher than those below. The royal family and their guests watched knight's tournaments and court ceremonies from the galleries.

Poles have always regarded Wawel as the heart of Poland. In the era of the medieval division of the country princes ruling the province of Cracow were also kings of Poland. The main part of the castle was built by King Zygmunt I Jagiellon, but a royal residence had been there as early as the 10th century. The royal castle was a place where regalia, masterpieces of art, jewels and the most important state papers were kept. One of the most valuable items is Szczerbiec, or a sword used during coronations. It was used for the first time in 1320 when Władysław the Elbow High became king. The regalia kept in Wawel, used for the last time when King Stanisław August Poniatowski was crowned, were stolen and melted by Prussians in the 1890s. The oldest monuments in the castle are wooden human heads in the ceiling of the Parliament Room. Of 194 sculpted coffers, made in the 16th century, only 30 have survived.

The famous collection of tapestries (called arras) was started in the 16th century by King Zygmunt II August. It contained over 300 tapestries made in the best European workshops in Europe, but only about 100 pieces have survived. As far as the artistic value is concerned, no other European collection can rival with this one. It is even more valuable because of the fact that it was commissioned by one ruler to decorate just one castle. The tapestries depicting biblical scenes, landscapes, animals, coats of arms and royal initials were prepared for particular rooms.

# KRASICZYN

Pearl of the Polish Renaissance



The magnificent residence was built in the late 16th and early 17th centuries by Stanisław Krasicki, the local royal administrator, and his son Marcin. The building was decorated more richly than any other aristocratic dwelling. The outer walls were decorated with impressive hunting scenes, biblical motifs, bas-reliefs of ancient rulers and portraits of Polish kings. The decorations occupy as much as 7,000 square metres and were made with the sgraffito technique (a few layers of plaster are put one on another and the surface is cut or scratched away to expose a different colour ground). The last member of the Krasicki family died in the 17th century. Afterwards, the palace belonged to a few different families and in the mid-19th century it became a possession of the Sapiehas, who restored it grandly. Soon after, however, there was a fire and almost all the palace burnt down. Only the palace chapel remained untouched. The residence was renovated at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th centuries. In most castles there are local ghosts. The one to be visible from time to time on hot summer nights in Krasiczyn is Bielica. It is the ghost of a girl who jumped off the window. The miserable girl did not want to marry a man that she did not love.

The corners of the wall surrounding the palace are crowned with four towers. The Divine, Papal, Royal and Noble Towers bear names representing the order of the social world of that period. The Noble and Papal Towers are crowned with a Renaissance attic, while at the top of the Royal Tower there are six small towers. The Divine Tower with a dome was the castle chapel.

# KRUSZWICA

Mouse Tower



The Ostrów Rzepowski cape with the 32-metre-high tower was an island when it was built. After five centuries, however, the surface of the lake lowered by a few metres and the island was joined with the land.

The Mouse Tower is situated on a hill near the Gopło Lake. According to legend, it has existed there since the origins of Poland. The country was then ruled by King Popiel, a famous and generous reveller. He was afraid that wealthy landowners (in another version of the legend these are his uncles) would deprive him of his rule, so one day he served them poisoned honey drink. From their bodies, thrown into the Gopło lake, thousands of mice crawled out and attacked Popiel. The terrified king hid in the tower, but the small rodents found him there and devoured him.

Many legends concerning King Popiel have been made up throughout history. His name can be found



St. Peter and Paul's church in Romanesque style

The basilica in Kruszwica, built in the 11th century, is one of the oldest churches in Poland. According to legend, a devil living in the forest nearby did not like the idea of building a church. He threw stones at the building, but prayers helped protect the walls. One dark night, the devil tried to shake the tower to destroy it. Fortunately, he was scared away by the first sunbeams. Scratches made by the devil's claws are still visible.

in *Chronicles* written by an anonymous French author (Gall Anonim). The writer, however, stated that King Popiel ruled in Gniezno, not far from Kruszwica. Moreover, mentioning the tower, where the scoundrel had hidden, the writer said it had been wooden. According to historical sources, the octagonal brick tower on the Ostrów Rzepowski cape is the only remainder of the giant 14th-century castle built by King Kazimierz the Great. 300 years later, the building was burnt and razed by the Swedish army.

# KRUSZYNIANY

Tartar mosque



The Tartar mosque in Kruszyniany is the oldest Muslim temple in Poland.

This is the only place in Poland, apart from nearby Bohoniki, where tourists can see an old Tartar mosque. The wooden building was constructed in the 18th century, and at first sight it could be taken for a village church, but there are Crescents on the towers. The interior is divided into two parts, as in Muslim temples men and women must pray separately. The service proper takes place in the part devoted to men. It is also in this part of the mosque that one can see a mihrab, or a small niche in the wall of a mosque that indicates the direction of Mecca. To the right of the mihrab there is a mimbar, or a pulpit resembling a small platform with a roof, where the imam delivers sermons. The floor is covered with carpets (visitors have to take off their shoes before entering the temple), and on the walls there are calligraphic inscriptions taken from the Koran.

Tartars settled down in Podlasie because King Jan III Sobieski granted them the land. According to legend, the king visited Kruszyniany himself to express his gratitude to Samuel Murza Krzeczkowski, a commander of a Tartar regiment, who had saved his life in the battle in 1683. As late as the 19th century descendants of

the Tartar colonel showed the chair in which the king had sat during his visit. Now we can see only very old linden trees growing in the place of the meeting. Before World War II there were very many Tartars in Kruszyniany and Bohoniki, but only a few families still live there. Polish Tartars observe only some Muslim traditions, being especially meticulous about ceremonies of giving names to the newborn, weddings and funerals. In Kruszyniany there is also one of the few Muslim cemeteries in Poland, where tourists can see the oldest Muslim grave in Poland, from 1704, with inscriptions in both Arabic and Polish.

# THE KRUTYNIA

Breath-taking canoeing route

The Krutynia, flowing from the Warpuny Lake in Pojezierze Mrągowskie, is one of the most picturesque rivers in Poland. It flows in Puszcza Piska and Mazury National Park, past the famous forrester's cottage Pranie, where Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński wrote his poems. The canoeing route starts in Sorkowity, where one can see a protestant church from the 15th century. In the upper course of the Krutynia canoers float across the Lampackie Lake, the Lampasz Lake, then follow the stretch of the river called Sobiepanka, and finally float to the Krutynia Lake and the river Ukta. The last part of the river is considered the most beautiful. Rafters carrying tourists in flat-bottomed boats are often met on the river. It is also suggested tourists visit the reserve Królewska Sosna (Royal Pine Tree)

The Krutynia flows in a land of nearly untouched wildlife, where many species of water birds can be seen, as well as the white-tailed eagle and the golden eagle. For the past few years ornithologists have protested against organised canoeing trips because of the birds being disturbed. The animals are frightened away from their nests, and their eggs cannot be hatched properly.



A great crested grebe



The famous Polish writer Melchior Wańkowicz floated along the Krutynia in 1934, and described the trip in the book entitled *Na tropach Smętka* (*Tracking Smętek*), which is a fascinating story of local inhabitants fighting for the right to protect their language and culture. The region then belonged to Germany.

with a 500-year-old oak tree, as well as the Zakręt reserve with floating reed islands. A visit to Wojnowo village, established in 1925 by conservative Orthodox Christians who were persecuted by the Russians, is also worth recommending. There is a wooden Orthodox church from 1920s. In Kadzidłów near Ukta there is a reserve with many wild species, such as the elk, the bison, the lynx and the wolf. The Krutynia flows into the Baidany Lake.

# KRZYŻTOPÓR

monumental ruins



For hundreds of years inhabitants of nearby villages have stolen bricks to build houses. Still, the ruins are striking.

Ujazd, a small village near Kielce, is famous for the ruins of a castle that was the biggest in Poland, and probably in all of Europe. Its name is a connection of *topór* (battleaxe), which was the coat of arms of the Ossoliński family, and *krzyż* (cross), a symbol of faith and adherence to the Catholic Church. Both these symbols can be seen over the main gate. The magnificent residence, designed by Wawrzyniec Senes, was built for Krzysztof Ossoliński in the years 1627-1644. The building is full of allusions to the calendar, which may be a result of the baroque obsession of

mortality and death. It had 365 windows, and 52 rooms, which corresponded to the number of weeks in a year, and 12 halls and four towers, symbolising the four seasons. The facade was decorated with 80 niches containing portraits of the in-laws of the Ossoliński family.

Many legends were told about the luxury of the castle. It is not attested to in written sources, but the ceiling in the ballroom was said to be made of glass, which was at the same time the bottom of a huge aquarium filled with exotic fish. In the stable there was a crystal mirror and a marble manger in front of every horse. This unbelievable building stood there for only eleven years as it was razed during the Swedish invasion. It was abandoned altogether in 1770. The local branch of the Ossoliński family experienced bad luck. The founder of the castle died just one year after his dwelling had been completed, and his son Krzysztof Baldwin was struck dead by a Tartar arrow in battle, leaving no successors. At the time of the full moon the miserable victim of the Tartars is said to stroll in heavy-weight cavalry armour.

# KSIAŻ

The biggest castle in Silesia



The eclectic building is situated on a steep hill in a beautiful forest. Strolling in the landscape park of Książ, one can reach many picturesque places.

It is the third biggest fortress in Poland (surpassed only by Malbork and Wawel). As the castle was renovated several times, parts of it are in different architectural styles. The castle was probably built on the site of an old fortified town by Bolko I, Prince of Świdnica and Jawor, in the years 1288-1292. It often changed hands later and in 1509 it became a possession of the Hochberg family, who settled down near Jelenia Góra in the 16th century. From 1548 to 1555 they renovated the castle in the Renaissance style, and in 1718 it was converted into a baroque residence. The construction, with short breaks, lasted until the mid-18th century. It was then that old fortifications were pulled down, a picturesque garden created, the main building enlarged, and new entrance gates put up.

The present grandious look of the castle is an achievement of Jo-

hann Heinrich XV of Hochberg. In 1891 he went to England, where he fell in love with Mary Teresa Olivia Cornwallis-West, called Daisy. Shortly after, they got married. He gave her an unusual greenhouse with palms, built in nearby Lubiechów.

Maximilian's Hall was named after Count Konrad Ernst Maximilian Hochberg – the funder of the baroque part of the residence. It was a place where aristocrats, politicians and artists were entertained. The interior is in the Viennese baroque style. Decorations on the walls were designed by many outstanding artists. A fine ceiling fresco, made by Czech painter Scheffler in 1732, is especially remarkable. The balconies over the corridor doors were for the music band, while those seen on the walls belonged to private rooms of the owners.



# KWIATOŃ

Lemkish church in Low Beskid region



The church in Kwiaton is an excellent example of a Lemkish temple, consisting of three parts, with the roof covered with wood tiles. The tower was built over the antechamber, where women prayed, the second spire is over the aisle, and the third one over the presbytery. The temple is now used by the Catholics.

The church in Kwiaton is one of the most beautiful temples in Poland, being also a fine example of the process of merging western and eastern cultures. Up to now, it has not been decided (even by themselves) whether the Lemkish are a separate nation or just a Ukrainian ethnic group. It is supposed that the characteristic Lemkish culture emerged when groups of settlers of various origin appeared in the region of the Beskid Niski (part of the Carpathians). The process of colonisation was intensified significantly in the 16th century. It was then, as historical acts prove, that the first Orthodox churches were built. In 1596 a treaty of union was

signed in Brest. The Polish Orthodox Church subdued to the Pope, but retained its traditions. The Lemkish therefore became Greek-Orthodox and created a unique architectural style of sacred buildings, which is a perfect merging of western and eastern elements. The oblong church had towers copied from churches in the south of Poland with baroque spires covered in tiles. The church in Kwiaton (said to have been built in 1700) is one of the oldest and exceptionally beautiful examples of Orthodox temples. Only few such "classical" Lemkish churches have survived, as the Lemkish were deported in 1947 by communist authorities, the result of which was seriously damaging to their culture and art. Similar churches can be seen in Tylicz (1743), Świątkowa Wielka (1757), Czarna (1764), and some other villages, as well as in the open-air museums in Sanok and Nowy Sącz. Churches built later have simpler forms and are more similar to Orthodox temples.

# LEŻAJSK

Church and cloister of the Bernardine order



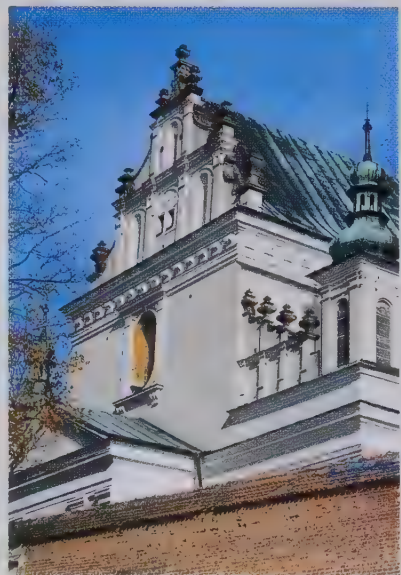
The organ in the basilica in Leżajsk

Leżajsk, a relatively small town, boasts over 120 historical buildings and a Jewish cemetery with the grave of a Chasidic rabbi Elimelech (1717-1787), a destination for pilgrimages of Jews from all over the world. Special fame, however, is attached to a cloister complex of the Bernardine order. The monks came to Leżajsk in 1608 and in the years 1618-1628 built their church where there had been a smaller, wooden church with a picture of the Madonna, famous for numerous miracles. The monumental baroque temple, where the sacred painting was moved to, is adjacent to a cloister built on rectangular foundations. All the buildings are surrounded by a solid wall with three towers, as the Bernardine order used to build fortified complexes in this part of Poland. For example, a similar one can be seen in Lvov.

The Madonna from Leżajsk was especially respected by King Władysław IV and *hetman* (general) Stefan Czarniecki. She was the protector of soldiers from the eastern fringe of Poland, and Poles captured by the Turks or Tartars prayed to her. In 1752 Pope Benedict XIV agreed on the coronation of the painting.

One of the oldest and most valuable organs in the world can be seen in the church in Leżajsk. Constructed in the late 17th century, the instrument has 75 stops and 5894 pipes. The biggest one is wooden and is 12 metres long. The organ was adorned with special decorations, such as moving and twittering wooden birds.

This monumental organ is richly decorated. The figure with a raised hand in the center is Hercules fighting against the Hydra – a symbol of righteousness versus evil.



The Bernardine church surrounded with a wall

# LICHEŃ

The Sanctuary of the Madonna



The basilica in Licheń – 120 metres long, 77 metres wide and 99 metres high (the tower will be 128 metres high) – is the biggest Catholic church in Poland, seventh biggest in Europe, and tenth in the world. The golden dome can be seen from several kilometres.

**T**omasz Kłossowski, a Polish soldier from a village near Licheń, was seriously hurt during the battle near Leipzig in 1813. Dying on the battlefield, he saw a radiant human shape with an eagle on her chest. The woman promised the soldier he would recover. In return, she told him to find the picture of her. Tomasz found a small painting in the village of Ligota near Częstochowa in 1836, and built a wooden chapel two kilometres from Licheń. After his death a poor shepherd Mikołaj Sikatka looked after the painting. In 1850 he experienced a revelation and afterwards he warned local inhabitants that the plague was coming. After an epidemic of cholera in 1852 the painting was regarded as miraculous. It was moved to a cemetery chapel, and two years later to the neo-Gothic Church of St. Dorothy in Licheń.

After World War II the parish in Licheń was taken over by the order of the Marian Priests and the significance of the sanctuary incre-

ased. Following the advice of the parson and guardian Eugeniusz Makulski, the parish was enlarged and paths leading to numerous chapels (of the Madonna from Ostra Brama in Vilnius, the Madonna from Częstochowa and so on), monuments and places of reflection were built. The idea of building a monumental basilica was also proposed by Makulski. This church has been built since 1994. It is dedicated by the Polish nation as an expression of gratitude for two thousand years of Christianity.

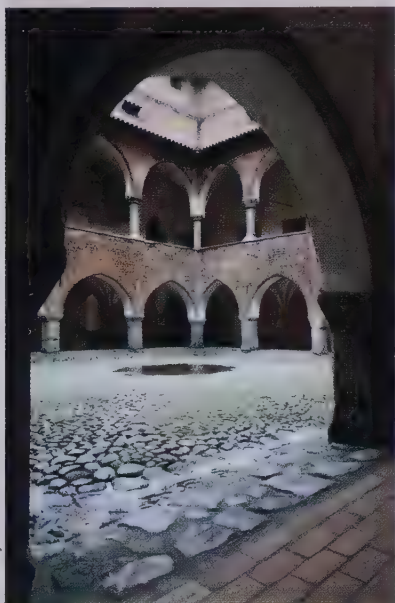
# LIDZBARK WARMIŃSKI

Bishop's residence



In 1749 an invaluable treasure was found in the castle library: a manuscript of the oldest chronicle of Polish history, composed by an anonymous writer from France (Gall Anonim).

Light and airy colonnades surrounding the inner courtyard of the castle in Lidzbark are regarded as masterpieces of Gothic architecture in Poland.



The castle in Lidzbark Warmiński is one of the best-preserved Gothic castles in Poland (surpassed only by the one in Malbork). It was built in the years 1348-1400 on the site of a previous Teutonic fortress. The bulk of the castle is square with an inner courtyard. There are two levels of cellars in the basement, and the building has four floors. The ground floor consists of rooms devoted to household work, the first and second floors were private apartments and guest rooms. There is also an attic where grain was stored and positions for defenders prepared. The significance of Lidzbark largely increased after the treaty of peace of 1466 had been signed which resulted in Warmia being part of Poland. Local bishops were also secular administrators, so they were granted the title of prince. Many of them belonged to the intellectual and cultural elite. Copernicus, for instance, spent the years 1503-1510 there, employed as the secretary and doctor for his uncle, Łukasz Watzenrode. For nearly thirty years the famous poet Ignacy Krasicki lived there and signed his poems XBW, which stood for Prince Bishop of Warmia. Krasicki created a beautiful garden around the castle and collected works of art. In 1772, when part of Poland was divided between three occupiers, Warmia became part of the Prussian state. Only after more than 150 years, in 1945, the town was in Poland again.

# LUBIAŹ

Cistercian abbey

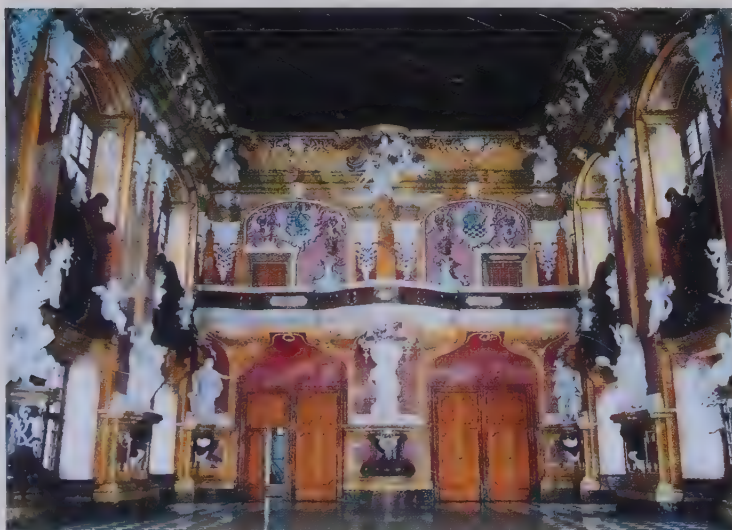


Built in the mid-12th century on a small hill near a meander of the Odra, the cloister was ruined during the wars against the followers of Jan Hus, then plundered by the Swedes, who robbed the treasury and library. After the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) there was a period of great splendor for the abbey, lasting more than 100 years. It was then that the cloister buildings and the abbot's house were pulled down. Soon after, a monumental building was erected there. Many artists contributed to the impressive renovation. The ceiling in the dining room is decorated with frescoes by Michał Willman, the most outstanding Silesian painter working in that period. Sculptor Mateusz Steinl made the main altar in the

A library, abbey's dining room, summer refectory and the Prince's Room, where concerts are organised, are the most impressive rooms in the abbey.

During the campaigns of Napoleon the abbey was a hospital, and during World War II it was converted into a plant producing weapons. Many valuable wooden altars were used by Russian soldiers as fuel.

cloister church as well as parts of altars in the naves and in the Prince's Chapel. Beautiful stalls, resembling a living garden, were also made in his workshop. Leaves and flowers formed an unusual canopy over sitting guests. Standing or sitting amongst them were angels, some of them playing string instruments (in the southern part), and brass instruments (in the north). The construction was dismantled at the end of World War II. Later it was transported to Steżycza near Dęblin, where it was "adapted" so it could be hung in the local church. Parts of it were cut off and the rest fastened with nails. Many other valuable items also got scattered throughout Poland. For example, paintings taken from Lubiąż are in 13 churches in Warsaw.



The Prince's Room

# ŁAGÓW

Castle of the order of the Ioannite Knights



The silhouette of the castle is dominated by a high tower, rectangular at the bottom, and cylindrical at the top. There used to be dungeons. The beautiful view of Łagów and the two lakes near the town is a reward for climbing to the tower.

The castle, partly in the Gothic style and partly in baroque, built in the 14th century on the site of a previous stronghold, is one of the most beautiful monuments in the region of Ziemia Lubuska. In 1347 Ludwig, count of Brandenburg, gave it to the Ioannite order to pay for his debts. The monks made an artificial hill on a narrow isthmus separating two lakes. The castle that they built was a dwelling of the Commander of the order, who controlled the land belonging to them. It was a vital link in the defence line as it is situated on borderland between Pomorze, Brandenburg, Wielkopolska and Silesia and protected Polish territories from a German invasion. The castle has remained in good condition. Even the Swedes, who took it over in the 17th century, did not destroy it. Visitors can get an idea of the old adornments when admiring the decorations in the Knight's Room and

the fireplace with the blazon of the Commander of the order.

The ghost of Andrzej von Schlieben, a commander who died in the 16th century, is said to have appeared in the castle since 1820. The ghost can be seen only in the spring and summer. The figure appears surrounded by flames and so far it has been seen only by men. There are also many rumours about treasures kept by the order. Some argue that part of the riches may have been hidden in the dungeons.

# ŁAŃCUT

Palace of the Lubomirski and the Potocki families



Presidents of nine Central European countries met in Łańcut in 1996. Each of them planted a tree in the park surrounding the palace.

It is a top-class monument, attracting many a tourist both from Poland and from abroad. King Władysław Jagiełło was a frequent guest in the original wooden castle belonging to the Pilecki family. In 1417 the king married the only daughter of the Pileckis, Elżbieta Granowska, a temperamental widow. At the end of the 16th century Stanisław Stadnicki, a notorious scoundrel, called the "Łańcut Devil", became the owner of the castle. Stadnicki invariably waged private wars against his neighbours, for example the famous Opalińskis. As a result of the constant wars the castle was ruined by Łukasz Opaliński. It was rebuilt by a new owner, Stanisław Lubomirski, one of the wealthiest aristocrats of that time. The dwelling, built in the years 1629-1941, was both a residence and a fortification. It was one of the few fortresses not captured by the Swedes in the 17th century. The biggest changes took place at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries, when the palace belonged to Izabela Lubomirska. The renovation took many years to complete, but the result was very impressive as the building could easily be a royal palace. The last owner of the residence, horrified of the Russian army appro-

aching in 1944, escaped to the West, taking 11 railway carriages full of works of art, but there is still much to admire. Visitors should see the Turkish Apartment, designed in the oriental style that was very popular at the end of the 18th century, in addition to the Room of Mirrors, decorated with wooden panelling in pastel colours in rococo style.

In the old economics buildings there is the biggest museum of coaches in Poland. Visitors can order a ride in a horse-drawn cab.



A coupé from the museum of horse-drawn vehicles in Łańcut

# ŁEBA

Moving dunes in the Słowiński National Park



Many interesting phenomena can be observed among the moving dunes, for example "singing sand". Pushed by wind, grains of sand emit sounds that cannot be distinguished from singing.

**W**ybrzeże Słowińskie, a many-kilometre stretch of coast from Łeba to Rowy, is a land of sandy hills, the biggest European area covered by moving dunes. Although a result of human economic activity, it was included in the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Directory.

The power of the dunes was experienced by inhabitants of Łączki in the 18th century as their village was completely covered by sand. It is estimated that the dunes, pushed by winds, move to the southeast 10-12 metres a year, the result being that Łebsko, the third biggest lake in Poland, is becoming increasingly smal-

ler. The biggest dunes are called Białe Góry (White Mountains). The highest peak reaches 45 metres. Looking from the top of this dune, one can see only sand, as if it were a typical desert. Łeba, situated not far from the dunes, competes against Ustka for the title of the summer capital of Poland. The area around it was inhabited as early as 5,000 years ago, although it was much later that the first permanent settlements were built. Pomeranian Slavonics, called Słowińce, used to live there. Surrounded by Germans in a German province, they retained their dialect and culture. In the village Kluki one can see their households with many original tools and artifacts. As the dunes virtually do not differ from a desert, the place has been a set for many film scenes, for instance the film *Pharaoh*.



The intense economic activity of inhabitants cutting down a huge number of trees destroyed the natural barrier to the dunes. Pushed by winds, they began moving. An unavoidable result of this is the steady process of covering forests and marshes by sand.

# ŁÓDŹ

Piotrkowska Street



Władysław Reymont described the street in his *Ziemia Obiecana (Promised Land)* as follows: "From the Gajeroski Market to Nawrot street it is an industrial street, from Nawrot to the New Market a mall and then down to the Old Town a street of Jews, kitsch and rubbish".

The Alley of Fame in Piotrkowska Street in Łódź belongs to film directors and actors. Stars commemorate outstanding artists, such as Jerzy Hoffman, Agnieszka Holland and Andrzej Seweryn.



Łódź is called a city of one street. The four-kilometre-long road running across the city centre is the longest shopping centre in Europe. There used to be banks, factories and luxury shops, as well as palaces of the wealthiest and most influential inhabitants. The same street was a place of riots in 1905, ruthlessly put down by the Russian army.

The street starts at the Wolności Square with a neoclassical city hall built in 1827 and the garrison church of the Holy Spirit built at the end of the 19th century. As many as 72 monuments are in Piotrkowska Street, such as factories, palaces and apartment houses. Hilary Majewski, one of the most outstanding architects working in Łódź, designed the famous palace of the Scheibler family (11 Piotrkowska St.). A fine example of modernist architecture is the bank designed by Gustaw Landau-Gutenteger (29 Piotrkowska St.). The building is decorated with masks and plant motifs. One of the most beautiful buildings in Łódź is a palace of Juliusz Heinzl, now the magistrate's offices. In the so-called "White Factory", built in 1835, there was the first mechanical cotton and weaving mill in the part of Poland occupied by Russia. Now there is a Museum of the Weaving Industry with a huge display of various kinds of fabric and a big exhibition of old weaving techniques.

# MALBORK

Castle of the Teutonic order



The castle is by the Nogat, a wide branch of the Vistula. When looked at from the far bank, the castle leaves an unforgettable impression. Equally magnificent views can be admired from the bridges over the Nogat. In summer tourists can indulge themselves in a boat trip along the river.

**T**he monumental fortress built in the Gothic style attracts tourists from the entire world. It is no wonder, as the castle is the biggest structure of this kind in Europe. In December 1997 it was included in the UNESCO World Heritage list.

The castle complex consists of several parts, built in different periods. In the years 1276-1280 the Convent Castle, later called the High Castle, was completed. After 1309, when Malbork was the capital town of the Teutonic state, it was renovated. The biggest changes were made in the years 1330-1334, when many rooms were changed from their original function. In the rectangular castle with towers in the corners there were cloister rooms: for instance, dormitories, a refectory and a chapter house, a chapel of the Holy Virgin Madonna and a treasury where there now is a unique exhibition of amber. In the Middle Castle, built in the early 14th century on the site of houses situated around the castle, there was for instance The Great Refectory, one of the biggest rooms for official

meetings in Europe, a hospital for sick and elderly monks and an innovative Palace of the Commander of the order. Now in the eastern wing of the Middle Castle there are museal expositions, such as display of armour and an exhibition of china. The biggest part of the fortress in Malbork are the household buildings, called the Low Castle. They have been partially restored and converted into a hotel.

# SAND BAR OF HEL

The Baltic scythe



A view towards the Rozewie cape from Kuźnica

This is probably the most significant feature on a map of Poland. In the narrowest part, near Kuźnica, it is only 200 metres wide, while the length of the whole coast line is as much as 74 kilometres. At a time of strong storms blowing from the north water sometimes breaks over the land to the gulf in the south. Once a railway line was destroyed.

The bar is a result of several islands joining, due to accumulating sand pushed by water and winds. As legend has it, one of the islands belonged to a god called Jastrzebóg. Fishermen from nearby villages came to him to offer him gifts. Finally, some of them settled down in present Jastarnia. Scientific research has proved that the site was inhabited as early as 2,000 years ago, and most of the towns on the bar were built in the Middle Ages. The inhabitants of the peninsula, which as late as the beginning of the 20th century was called "Hela", were pirates arousing fear in the whole Gdańska Bay.

The Hel sand bar is the only place in Poland with southern beaches (by the Pucka Bay). The water there is warm and the sea calm, and attracts many holiday-makers. The peninsula boasts the highest number of sunny days a year.

Every year on July 29th picturesque flotillas sail from Kuźnica to Puck because of the festival of St. Peter and St. Paul.



# MORSKIE OKO

Mountain lake in the mist of legends



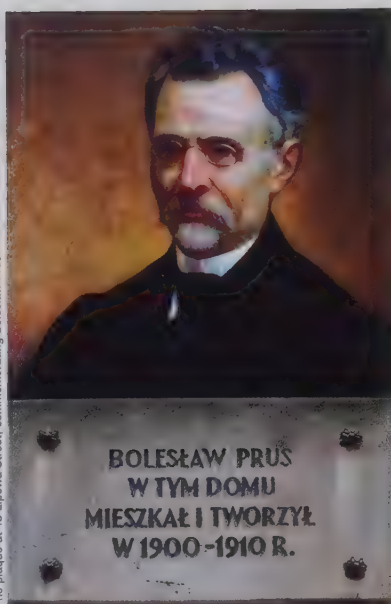
This is one of the most popular places in the Tatras, visited by thousands of tourists every year. It was a popular destination as early as the beginning of the 19th century. The lake in the Rybi Potok Valley is in a postglacial hollow at an elevation of 1,395 metres. The waters are held by a dyke created by a glacier. Near the lake there is a 100-year-old mountain shelter. Commonly regarded as the biggest lake in the Tatras (86.25 acres, but in other estimates 87.25 acres), according to some researchers, it is surpassed only by the Wielki Lake in the Five Lakes Valley. The maximum depth of the Morskie Oko lake is 50.8 metres. The water is green and visibility reaches 11-14 metres, thanks to which it is easy to spot the trout. It is the only lake in the Tatras with natural fish. In the past, spring trout were also recorded in the lake. That could be the reason that the lake was once called Rybi Staw, or Fish Lake. The present name, Morskie Oko, or Sea Eye, is associated with a legend. The lake is said to be connected to the Adriatic. There are stories about parts of wrecks being washed up on the shore of the lake and great fish living in the deep waters.

The surroundings of the lake are a very interesting area for naturalists. Walking along the path around the lake, one can, for example, see giant stone pines.

# NAŁĘCZÓW

Favourite resting place of Bolesław Prus

The plaque at 16 Lipowa Street, commemorating Bolesław Prus



The house was occupied by Bolesław Prus for ten years, which is commemorated with a plaque.

People would become much better if they could come to Nałęczów at least once a year, according to famous writer Bolesław Prus, who used to spend every holiday there for 28 years (since 1882). During his time, from the 1880s to the beginning of the 20th century, the spa was in its prime. It was a destination for many celebrities, such as Henryk Sienkiewicz, Ignacy Paderewski, Karol Szymanowski and Stefan Żeromski. Nałęczów has retained its air of an old-style resort and is still famous for its springs and unique microclimate. In the palace of the Małachowski family, surrounded by a vast and meticulously protected park visitors can see the two rooms in which Prus lived and worked. There are also many other reminders of his presence there, though no trace of a small wooden house with a roof covered in moss so that the writer was not disturbed by drops of rain. In 1890 Stefan Żeromski, then a modest private te-



The summer house of Stefan Żeromski

The house where Żeromski used to work is a fine example of the architectural style developed in Zakopane. At the end of the 19th century many villas in the Swiss and Italian styles were built. Thanks to this eclectic character the town has a unique air.

acher, only dreaming of a literary career, appeared in Nałęczów. There he met a daughter of one of the directors of the spa, a young widow named Oktawia Rodkiewicz, whom he soon married. In 1905 he built a summer house called Chata (the Hut) from the money he had received for his novel *Popioły* (Ashes). The interior has not been since changed because as early as three years after the writer died (in 1925) it became a museum.

# NIEBORÓW

Masterpiece by fine women



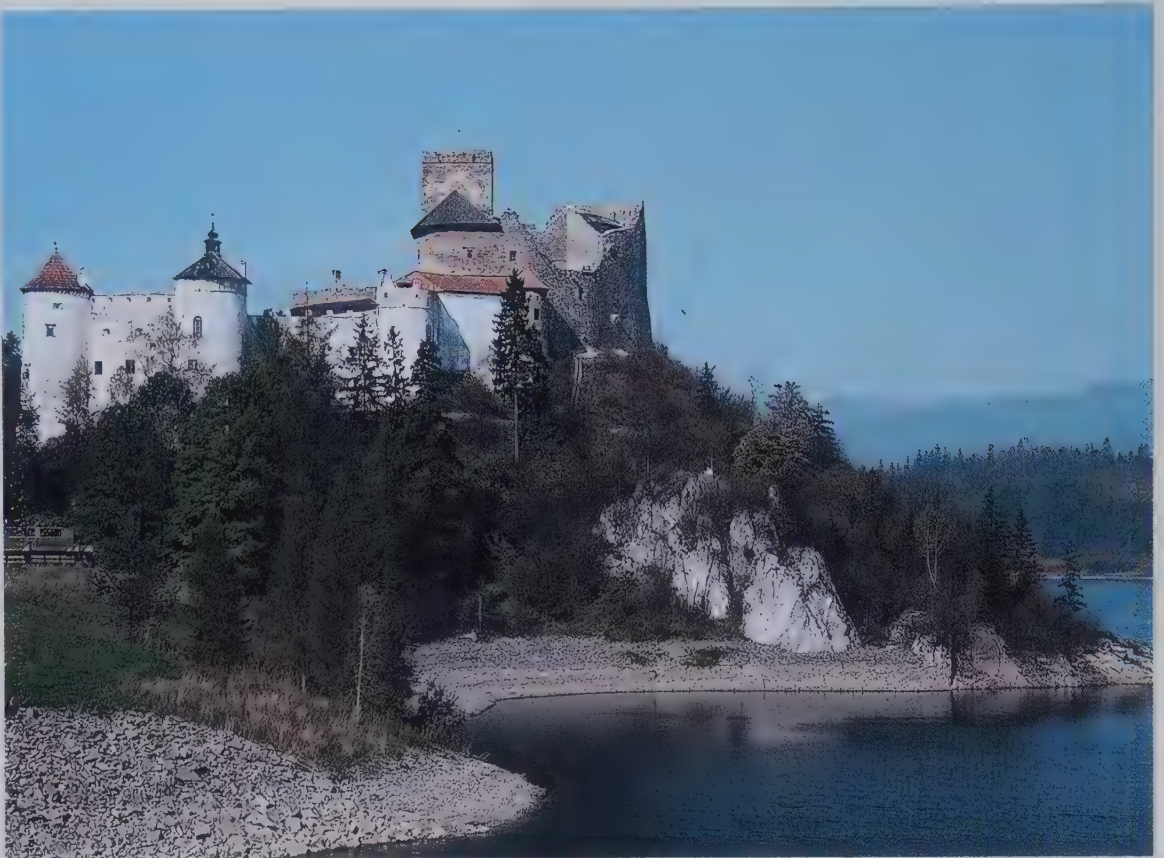
A portrait of Anna Orzelska is one of the most beautiful items decorating the Red Room. Anna, an illegitimate daughter of King August II, was believed to be the most beautiful woman in Poland in the baroque period. According to legend, she strolls around the palace at night.

The shapely bulk of the palace is in perfect harmony with the geometrical park, along with the one in Wilanów regarded as the best preserved baroque parks.

One of the few aristocratic dwellings in Poland that has remained nearly untouched inside. It was designed by Tilmann van Gameren, a Dutch architect who settled down in Poland and was one of the most outstanding Polish architects of the 17th century. The palace was built in the years 1694-1697. The palace, surrounded by a beautiful park, was a dwelling of Cardinal Michał Radziejowski, a primate of Poland. His portrait can be seen in the library, which also contains two huge Venetian globes from the 17th century and numerous valuable books. The main staircase is covered with nearly 10,000 hand-made Dutch tiles with different patterns. A head of Niobe, praised by the poet Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński, and made from white marble, is worth mentioning. The sculpture is a Roman copy of a Greek statue, presented by Catherine II, ruler of Russia, to Helena Radziwiłł. Helena was famous for her beauty and interest in the arts. She spent much time and money decorating Nieborów. The palace belonged to the Radziwiłłs until 1945, and later it was converted into a museum.

# NIEDZICA

Picturesque castle in the Pieniny range



**T**he castle was built around 1330 by a Hungarian family of the Berzevics near a frontier between Hungary and Poland. It was on an important trade route. In the early 17th century György Horváth, then owner of the castle, converted the Gothic building into a Renaissance residence. 150 years later unusual guests arrived: an Inca princess and her little son. Why did they come there? Sebastian, the last descendant of the Berzevics family, went to Peru, where he married a daughter of the chief of an Indian tribe. In this family Umina was born, who married the prince of an ancient Inca clan. After a rebellion against the Spaniards failed, all the family escaped to Europe in 1782. Umina's husband was killed in Venice. Then, Sebastian took his daughter and his grandson to Niedzica to protect them, but in vain. One evening Umina was killed with a knife in the courtyard. Her son was adopted by his grandfather's relatives who called the boy Benesz. In 1946 his great-great-grandson Andrzej Benesz, following the instructions that he had found in family documents, discovered a vessel with thongs and golden plates under the stairs leading to the castle. Three names could be read on the plates: Titicaca (a lake in Peru), Vigo (a city in Spain) and Dunajecz (for ages the castle in Niedzica was called Dunajecz). Nobody could decipher the knotted thongs (quipu), but treasure-seekers believe that Incas hid part of their legendary treasure in the castle in Niedzica.

The castle in Niedzica is one of the best preserved fortresses in Poland.

# NOWY WIŚNICZ

Castle that hosted kings



A wealthy family of the Kmitas built a wooden settlement on one of the hills around Nowy Wiśnicz. The settlement was converted into a Gothic castle in the 14th century. When it belonged to Piotr Kmita, the last descendant of the family, who was an administrator of Cracow district and the Great Royal Marshall, it was almost as great as the royal castle of Wawel. The decorations were a proof of Kmita's wealth and artistic taste. The family had a huge library and often invited intellectuals, such as poet Klemens Janicki and historian Marcin Bielski, as well as royal couples: Zygmunt the Old with Bona Sforza and Zygmunt August with Barbara Radziwiłł. According to legend, during

Going to war in 1621, Stanisław Lubomirski swore that if he was victorious, he would build a church of Christ the Saviour on a hill near the castle and a cloister adjacent to it. He kept his promise. Now in the baroque cloister of the Carmelite order there is a prison.



The cloister of the Carmelite order, now a prison

a banquet organised by Piotr Kmita Barbara, who was hated by Bona, her mother-in-law, was poisoned. When the marshall died without any successors, the castle was sold to the Lubomirskis. Sebastian Lubomirski renovated the castle in the baroque style. He had an additional floor and a fifth tower built. The castle was also surrounded with a terrace. There were a hundred rooms in the dwelling and all the frames were made of marble. Doors, as well as the floors, were made of various kinds of exotic wood and in most of the windows there was colourful stained glass. Paintings by Raffaello Sanzio, Titian and Dürer were hung in the palace gallery. The castle was well protected (there were fortifications, dykes and ramparts), but it was captured and plundered by the Swedes in the 17th century. It has not since been restored to its original greatness. It has also declined because of several fires. One of them even destroyed part of the town.

# OBLĘGOREK

Museum of Henryk Sienkiewicz



A country house in Oblęgorek – once the writer's house, now a museum.

This artistic house was given to the great writer by the Polish nation to celebrate his 25-year-long activity. Sienkiewicz received the property on 22 December 1900, in a city hall in Warsaw, after a celebrated mess in the church of the Holy Cross. He was also given sixty cows, six horses and farming equipment. At first the writer was not delighted. Absorbed by writing, he spent much time abroad, so he did not have time to indulge in the country life and the administration of land possession. Only when his third wife, Maria Babska, energetically prepared the house for them, he went there on his summer holiday. In 1968 the museum of Henryk Sienkiewicz was opened in the house. It is the biggest of several

museums devoted to him (in Wola Okrzejska in Podlasie, where he was born, and in Poznań, for instance). In the carefully restored interior visitors can see the writer's furniture and mementoes, some of which were taken from his apartment in Warsaw. For example, Sienkiewicz's surprisingly small bed and a valuable wooden box for small items, decorated with ebony. The museum also has impressive collection of 130 manuscripts of Sienkiewicz, the first Polish writer honoured with the Nobel Prize.

A desk of the writer in his study in Oblęgorek. Sitting at it, Sienkiewicz wrote *In Desert and Wilderness*. The walls are decorated with guns and hunting trophies, as hunting was the writer's favourite pastime.



# OGRODZIENIEC

Ruins of the biggest castle in the fortress line of Orle Gniazda



The Kredencerska tower is the most impressive part of the ruins. From the top visitors can admire a beautiful landscape.

Most of the strongholds on the limestone hills were built during the reign of King Kazimierz the Great in order to protect the southern border of his kingdom. Ogrodzieniec was built at the highest elevation (504 metres) in a place with strong natural defences. The method of integrating a huge stone complex with a fabulous Jurassic landscape is still admired. In 1523 the castle, which had lost its strategic significance, was bought by Jan Boner. He was one of the richest Poles, a banker of King Zygmunt the Old and a salt mogul. The main source of his enormous wealth was a salt mine in Wieliczka. Seweryn Boner, his nephew, inherited the riches and converted the castle into a luxurious residence. According to his contemporaries, it could rival the royal castle of Wawel. Some were even of the opinion that it surpassed Wawel. Sadly, it was captured and plundered by the Swedes in the 17th century. Never did it regain its splendor. The last owner was forced to leave the dwelling in 1810 as the ceilings were likely to collapse.

In 1974 parts of the picturesque ruins were opened to tourists. The vast outer town is surrounded by stone ramparts with huge

stone blocks in the corners. A bridge over the moat leads to the gate. Thanks to archaeological excavations and restoration, carried out for many years, much is known about Ogrodzieniec in its golden age. The so-called High Castle was a three-storey building. Only the first floor has remained. In the basement a unique gravitative cooling system was built. The rooms there were used as food stores.

# OPINOGÓRA

Museum of Romanticism

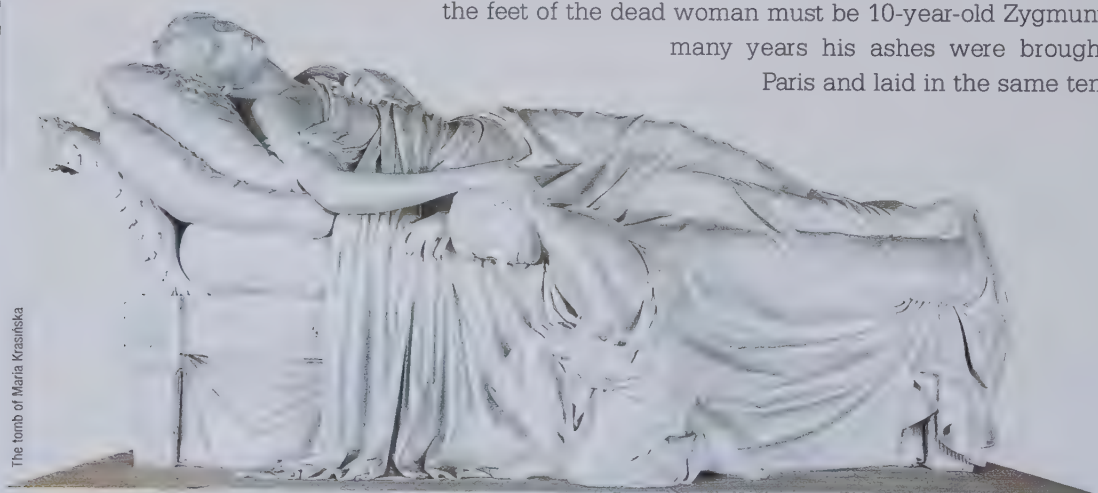


The castle in Opinogóra

The small castle is surrounded by a picturesque park. One can still see the stone table that the poet used to sit at, along with a neo-Gothic love bench, ordered by Amelia Zaluska, the poet's first love.

From the mid-17th century Opinogóra belonged to the Krasiński family. The dwelling was in excellent condition thanks to Wincenty Krasiński, an ambitious general fighting alongside Napoleon, and later loyal to Russia. In 1828 he started building a neo-Gothic castle, which he later presented to his only son, Zygmunt Krasiński. The famous poet received it on the day he married Eliza Branicka, in August 1843. Various mementoes of the poet and his closest family and friends, for example photographs, can be seen in the Museum of Romanticism, opened in 1961. There are also valuable items from the times of Napoleon displayed, such as his briefcase with the initials J and N, presented to him by his wife Josephine. Napoleon lost the briefcase during the Berezina battle. The cult of the French emperor, characteristic of Polish romanticism, was also expressed in paintings. Visitors should look at *Somosierra* by January Suchodolski. It is a

replica of a painting commissioned in Paris by Wincenty Krasiński. The general wanted to be shown at the head of the cavalry, though in fact he did not take part in the famous charge. In the nearby church there is the tomb of Maria Radziwiłł-Krasińska, the mother of the poet, made of white marble. She died from tuberculosis at a young age. The boy on his knees at the feet of the dead woman must be 10-year-old Zygmunt. After many years his ashes were brought from Paris and laid in the same temple.



The tomb of Maria Krasińska

## Cathedral of the Holy Virgin Mary

## Cathedral of the Holy Virgin Mary



The three-aisle cathedral is crossed near the center by a transept. The crossing is crowned with a baroque spire.

The temple was probably built from the end of the 13th century or the beginning of the 14th century. It was then that the Cistercian order received the village Pelplin from Mściwój II, a prince of Pomerania, and the monks started building a church. It was built until the 15th century, but the last vaults in the transept were made in the mid-16th century. In 1823 the Prussian authorities (from 1772 Pelplin had been in the district of Poland occupied by Prussia) dissolved the Cistercian abbey. A year later Pelplin became the main town in the Chełmin diocese, and the church became the cathedral.

The only elements of the original decorations in the late Gothic style are the stalls made in the years 1450-1463. Some of the iconographic symbols are very rare, for example the Holy Spirit is shown as a young man holding a dove, and Christ is crucified by women symbolising the virtues. In the cathedral in Pelplin there are also many interesting monuments from later times, such as the largest main altar in this part of Europe, made in the 17th century and decorated with paintings by Herman Han, an outstanding painter working in Pomerania, and an original baroque pulpit supported by a head of Samson tearing the mouth of a lion, as well as an organ in the transept.

Among many incunabula collected in the Diocesan Museum in Pelplin there is also the only copy of the Gutenberg's Bible in Poland (there are only 45 copies of this book in the world). The book was taken to Canada during World War II and brought back together with treasures from the royal castle of Wawel in 1959.

# PIESKOWA SKAŁA

Castle hanging over the Prądnik valley

The castle is one of the most beautiful Renaissance structures in Poland. An original fortress in the Gothic style was probably erected during the reign of King Kazimierz the Great. In 1377 King Ludwik the Hungarian gave it to the knight Piotr Szafraniec as compensation for being wounded and insulted by a member of the king's guard. According to a medieval historian Długosz, the first owner of the castle was involved there in alchemy and black magic. In the 16th century Hieronim Szafraniec, the secretary of King Zygmunt I, and his cousin Stanisław converted the castle into a magnificent building in the Renaissance style, compared later to the royal castle of Wawel. For unknown reasons it was surrendered to the Swedes during their invasion in the 17th century and completely plundered. Later it was thoroughly rebuilt a few times, but fate was not benevolent to it. It was destroyed by fire several times (for instance, in 1863, during the rebellion against Russia), and in 1853 a piece of rock fell down and destroyed one of the towers, named Dorotka. At the end of the 19th century the ruins were to be pulled down. However, a famous writer, Adolf Dygasiński suggested the castle should be renovated. He established a company that converted it into a hotel. After World War II professional renovators looked after the castle. It took nearly twenty years (1948-1965) to restore the building to Renaissance style. Now there is a museum – a division of the collection of the royal castle of Wawel.



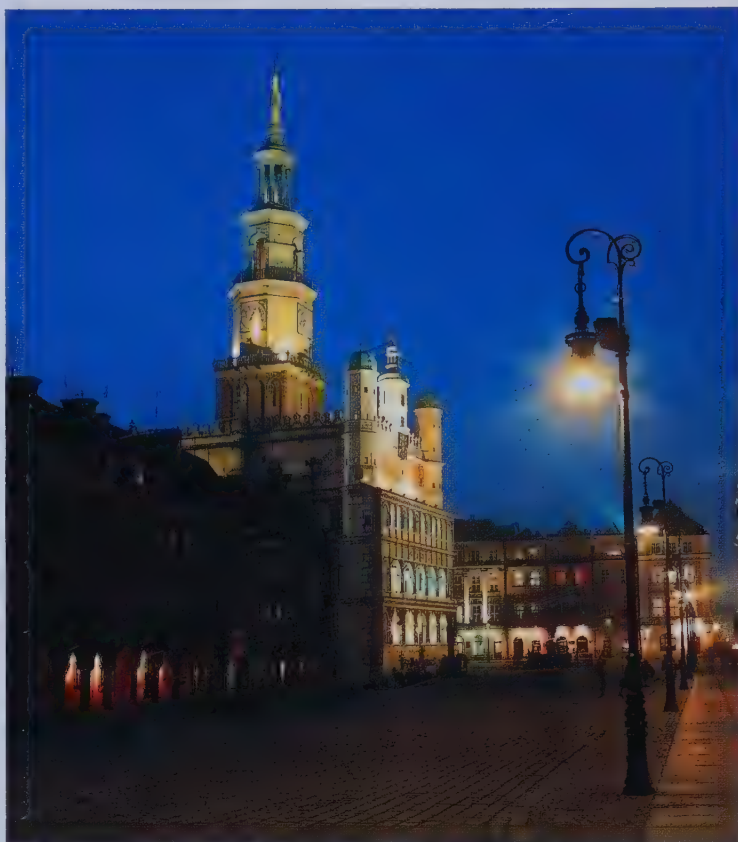
The precipices guarding the castle from three sides are 20 metres high.

# POZNAŃ

City hall in the Renaissance style and the Old Market

The city hall in its present form was designed by Giovanni Battista Quadro from Lugano, who renovated the building destroyed by fire in 1536. Having been granted a commission from the city, Quadro worked in Poznań through the years 1550-1560. The main facade of the building, with a balcony consisting of three floors, is richly decorated with paintings showing Polish rulers, biblical scenes and symbols of virtues. At the beginning of the 20th century the building was thoroughly renovated. Some of the paintings were then destroyed. At the end of the same century the process of reconstruction began, intended to restore the former greatness. In the interior the Great Antechamber with its magnificent ceiling in the Renaissance style is especially remarkable. The most famous feature of the city hall are the two goats in the tower, appearing and striking with their horns twelve times at midday. They are watched by crowds of tourists.

The wooden buildings in the Old Market were pulled down from the late 15th century and gradually replaced with brick houses. Most of them were destroyed in 1945, when Poznań was liberated. In the following two decades the buildings were renovated. The palace of the Działyński family, built in the years 1773-1776, and the palace of the Górka family, built in the Renaissance style in 1548, with a colonnade are especially interesting.



The city hall

In 1783 an eagle, the Polish national emblem, was put on the tower. It was not taken off during the time of occupation of Poland in the 19th century. The Germans had it pulled down during World War II. It was put back there in 1947.

The house "Pod Daszkiem" (The Roof; number 50) is known from the story of King August II the Strong, who after a heavy drinking session following dinner fell out of the window and survived only thanks to the roof. From the 16th century till 1945 in house number 37 there was a pharmacy, named "The Red Pharmacy".



The houses in the Old Market

# THE DUNAJEC RAVINE

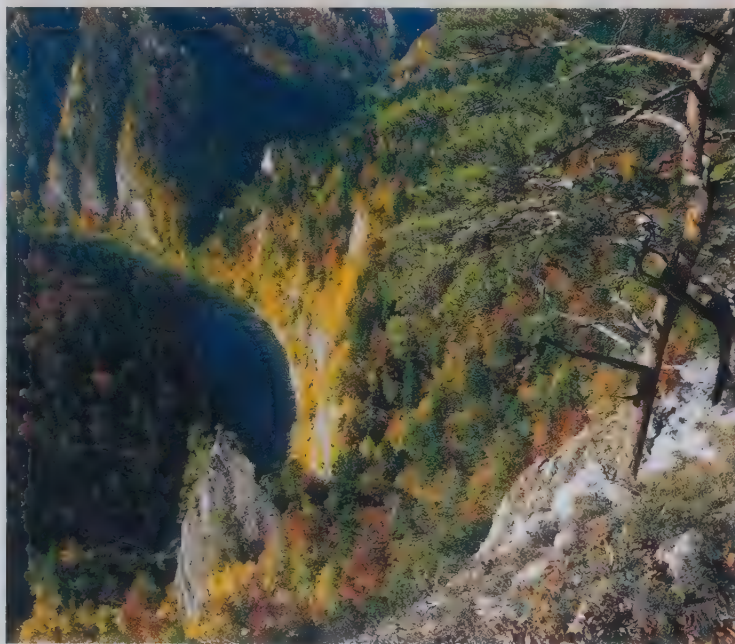
The most beautiful river ravine in Europe



Trzy Korony (Three Crowns)

The peak of Okraglica, the highest of the peaks of Trzy Korony is at an elevation of 982 metres, 552 metres above the Dunajec.

Unforgettable views can be admired from the peak of Sokolica (747 metres) in the Pieniny.



Flowing across the Pieniny range, the Dunajec made an extremely picturesque, narrow gorge with steep, mostly forested slopes crowned with limestone peaks near Sromowce and Szczawnica. As early as in the 1930s tourists could float down the river on rafts made of logs. "The views are so impressive that visitors to Szczawnica go for walks in big groups. In the morning a flotilla consisting of fifteen boats leaves Sromowce, a village near Czorsztyn. The boats, made of spruce trunk, are not stable and have to be paired. At the front of the flotilla there is a boat with musicians and another with mortars, used in places where their sound is echoed." Such a description was written by Ludwik Zejszner. Floating down the Dunajec is equally fascinating now, so many tourists come here from around the world. The 15-kilometre-long stretch from Kąty to Szczawnica (or 3.5 kilometres longer if one wishes), and on to Krościenko offers a wonderful opportunity to admire the beauty of the ever changing landscape in the Pieniny range. Helmsmen of the rafts (consisting of five boats joined together with wood and ropes) tell traditional local legends to entertain tourists. Steering with 3.5-metre-long poles, they talk about how Janosik, the local hero, escaped from soldiers and they show the place where he jumped over the river. His footprints are still visible in the stone on the left bank...

# CAPE ROZEWIE

The northernmost cape in Poland

Already in ancient times a fire was started on the spot also known as Rosenhaupt (or Rosehaupt) to help fishermen coming home. At the end of the 17th century there was a lighthouse there, according to Swedish maps from that period. Sadly, when Poland was occupied by three neighbouring countries, the lighthouse was not used. The lamps were lit again only after several tragedies (for example, in 1807 fourteen French ships crashed against the shore in a storm). When the old lighthouse could not be used any more, a new one was built in the mid-19th century. It was 21 metres high and there were 15 modern lamps. During a renovation at the end of the 19th century the lighthouse got modern equipment and a staff consisting of three lighthousekeepers. When a similar lighthouse was built in Czołpin near Łeba, one was also



The lighthouse in Rozewie became famous thanks to Stefan Żeromski and it is now named after the writer. He spent the years 1920-1924 there. The museum of the writer is situated near the Museum of Lighthouse-keeping, opened in 1963.



The lighthouse in Rozewie

The lighthouse in Rozewie has very modern equipment. Two panels consist of 20 lamps each. The light can be seen from as far away as 26 miles (about 48 kilometres). In a foghorn emits the letter "R" in the Morse code.

built in addition to the old one at Rozewie, 200 metres away. The older one was later modernised and made higher by nearly 13 metres. Its light became the main signal in this region of the Baltic sea. The two lighthouses (only one still working) on the cape are protected from the sea by an 800-metre-long concrete wall.

# PSZCZYNA

Palace of the Hochbergs



Kings, diplomats and other celebrities were guests of the palace. For example, it was visited by Georg Philipp Telemann, a famous German composer, a contemporary of Johann Sebastian Bach.

The Room of Mirrors, which used to be a dining room, makes the biggest impression, being one of the best-preserved 19th-century rooms in Poland. Two huge mirrors are as huge as nearly 15 square metres each.



The thick forest surrounding Pszczyna, full of deer and bison, was a hunter's delight. Princes from the Piast family loved hunting there, and they built a castle, probably as early as the 11th century. Later, the region of Pszczyna belonged to many families. In the 16th century its owner was Baltazar Promnitz, Bishop of Wrocław. Later the castle was renovated several times, and eventually in the 18th century it was no longer a fortress, but a luxurious residence.

In 1846 the palace became a possession of the Hochberg family, one of the wealthiest aristocratic families in Europe. In the 1860s it was completely rebuilt in the neobaroque style after a design by Alexander Destailleur, who also designed the lobby and stairs modelled after the stairs in Versailles. The stairs led to a glass door opening to a vaulted antechamber panelled with oak wood. There is now a tapestry there given to one of the owners by the Russian empress Catherine II.

There are also many trophies collected by the Hochbergs, who often invited European kings to hunts. To make it even more attractive, in 1865 bison were brought to the forest surrounding Pszczyna. Now there is a special reserve of bison in Jankowice.

# THE BŁĘDOWSKA DESERT

Polish Sahara



During World War II German troops practised here before being sent to Africa. After the war the area was also used as a practice range.

The size of the desert may not be impressive (about 8 kilometres long and nearly 4 kilometres wide), but it is the only European area of an entirely desert character. Not long ago phenomena such as sandstorms and mirage could be observed there. Sadly, the incursion of plants, including some species that were introduced by man, such as the Caspian willow, has caused major changes. You should hurry if you want to see the Polish desert before it disappears for good.

What is the reason for 2.5 billion cubic metres of sand being there, near Olkusz? According to legend, a devil could not bear local inhabitants becoming well-off thanks to mining silver, so he decided to cover the mines with sand. He took a great sack full of sand and flew

with it, but on his way he tore the sack on a church tower and the sand fell to the ground. Actually, it was brought there by water flowing from a melting glacier.



Despite hard conditions some plants, such as the grass characteristic of sandhills near the sea, steadily invade the desert.

# THE BIAŁOWIESKA FOREST

The bison's realm



If one cannot see bison at large, one can study them in a reserve near Białowieża.

**I**t is the only lowland primordial forest that has survived in Europe. It was a hunting area of Polish kings and was not exploited heavily, the reason why it retained its natural characteristics. In 1921 a small part of the forest became a protected area, and eleven years later a reserve was established, the beginning of a national park, created in 1947. The forest consists of several thousand trees. Nowhere else in Poland can such enormous trees be seen. Amongst them are 2,500 trees that are monuments of nature, with the most beautiful parts of the forest being those

In 1979 the Białowieża forest was included in the UNESCO World Heritage list, being the only natural area in Poland on this list.



with oak, hornbeam, linden and maple trees. In spring there are huge carpets of white anemone, liverleaf and spring squill. The fauna of the forest is equally rich. There are many endangered species, such as the two tiny birds, the dull green leaf warbler and the aquatic warbler. The bison are especially interesting, as their survival and return to the wild is one of the world's conservation success stories. The last bison living in the wild was killed in 1919, but a competent breeding of the animals in zoos enabled the creation of a small herd. The first bison was set free in the Białowieża forest in 1952. Now there are about 300 of them.

# RADZYŃ PODLASKI

Tiny treasure in the rococo style



The palace of the Potocki family



The greenhouse in Radzyń Podlaski

The tropical greenhouse in the rococo style is exceptionally enchanting. It is crowned with a dynamic sculpture depicting Apollo's chariot drawn by three horses.

Once the palace was one of the most beautiful residences in the late baroque style. Now, due to the World War II damage, it is not as famous for its artistic value as it should be. Unfortunately, the palace was burnt down by retreating Germans in 1944.

Nothing has remained of the once luxurious interior, only an adorned staircase has been renovated. The building itself, reconstructed in the 1950s and 1960s, is a site of various magistrate's offices.

The palace was designed and built in 1686 by Augustyn Locki, the architect who also designed the residence in Wilanów. In the years 1750-1759 it was renovated by the renowned Warsaw architect Jakub Fontana. The renovation was commissioned by Eustachy Potocki, then owner of the palace, who wanted to surpass Jan Klemens Branicki, who was the owner of a nearby palace in Białystok – the Versailles of Podlasie. The building has the shape of a horseshoe and is richly decorated with picturesque cartouches, plants clinging to walls, war trophies and cherubs.

In the wings surrounding the vast courtyard there are two towers with high spires, one of them with Pilawa, the heraldic shield of the Potocki family, the other with Jeleń, the coat of arms of Eustachy Potocki's wife (née Kątska). Sculptures showing four of the labours of Hercules are an impressive decoration of the gates. An old park with a picturesque pond is full of old, remarkably beautiful larch trees, some of them over 300 years old.

# ROGALIN

Palace amongst famous oaks



A geometrical park at the back of the palace, one of the best-preserved, gradually changes into a wild nature park with meadows near the Warta. The park boasts the largest number of old oaks in Europe.

The palace was built in the years 1768-1776 in the baroque and neoclassical styles for Kazimierz Raczyński, who secured the wealth for his family. Dominic Merlini and Johann Christian Kamsetzer, the two favourite architects of King Stanisław August, contributed to a renovation, completed in 1815. The palace became a residence worthy of a king, one of the most magnificent palaces in Wielkopolska.

Edward Raczyński, Kazimierz's grandson, the founder of the public library that is still working in Poznań, was one of the most praiseworthy inhabitants of Wielkopolska. His grandson, Edward Aleksander, continued his artistic activity and amassed a very valuable collection of paintings. It was displayed in a greenhouse specially built for that purpose in the park surrounding the palace. During World War II part of the collection, some 200 paintings, were lost, but

there are still 300 works of art, including masterpieces by Malczewski and Wyspiański.

The last private owner of Rogalin was Edward Raczyński (1891-1993), an outstanding politician and diplomat, Polish ambassador to London in the years 1934-1945, and later the last president of the emigre government. In 1991, on his 100th birthday, he gave all his riches to the Polish nation, creating an appropriate foundation.

Once believed to have started growing as early as the 10th century, now the oldest oaks in Rogalin are estimated to be 550-600 years old. Lech, Czech and Rus are the most famous giants.



The most famous oaks in Rogalin: Lech, Czech and Rus

# RYDZYNA

Palace of the Leszczyński and Sułkowski families



After Poland regained independence in 1918, the Sułkowskis gave their possessions to the state. In the 1920s there was an elite high school there. During World War II the building was a center of Hitlerjugend.

The first stronghold was built here in the 14th century. At the end of the 17th and the beginning of 18th centuries the palace of the Leszczyński family was built. The works were partly supervised by the famous Italian architect Pompeo Ferrari. The castle was converted into a spacious aristocratic dwelling on an artificial hill, surrounded with a moat. There was also a riding school, stables and carriage stores, a greenhouse and a shooting gallery. In 1738 the palace was taken over by the Sułkowski family, who had it renovated again. Marcin Frantz, who supervised the renovation, designed the town in the baroque style. It is one of the few towns of that kind that have remained virtually unchanged. Jerzy Neuenhertz, a respected Silesian painter, made beautiful ceiling decorations adorning the two-storey-high ball room. The palace was surrounded by a romantic park, in accordance with the fashion of that period. Numerous changes taking place in the residence have not discouraged the local ghost, a lady clad in white, who on the night of November the 1st walks from the palace to a chapel, where she waits for absolution, having committed horrible crimes. In vain...

Hardly anything has survived from the once rich decorations of the interior. The items that survived World War II were destroyed later as the Russian army burnt the palace down in 1945. Fabulous decorations that can be admired in the Sea Room are a result of renovations done in the years 1972-1982. The renovators studied the remains, old drawings and photographs.



# SANDOMIERZ

One of the oldest Polish cities



The town hall in Sandomierz

A medieval urban plan has remained in Sandomierz – there is a town hall, a market and town walls. A great tourist attraction is the tunnel joining the basements of old houses.

Lying among seven hills making a picturesque landscape by the Vistula, full of wonderful monuments that have luckily survived many historical disasters, the town is sometimes called a “small Rome”. Beloved by many artists, it is mentioned or described in books by Żeromski, Reymont and Wańkowicz. Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz was a frequent guest of the house at 3 Katedralna St., where there is a museum devoted to this outstanding Polish writer. The church of St. Jacob is one of the most interesting monuments of Sandomierz, being one of the three churches in the Romanesque style built not of stone, but of brick. The main gate of the church is decorated with a portal from the 13th century. Inside, lay the remains of 49 monks of the Dominican order, the so-called “martyrs of Sandomierz”. The monks died a horrible death, killed by Tartars in 1260. Not far from the church there is an entrance to Wąwóz Królowej Jadwigi (St. Hedwig’s Gorge). According to legend, Hedwig was on her way from Sandomierz to Kraków when a horrible blizzard began. Inhabitants of the nearby village helped her and in return she paid their debts to a ruthless land owner. The locals were obliged to serve in the cathedral. The white leather gloves that they received to commemorate the first day of their service can still be seen in the Diocesan Museum in Jan Długosz’s House, founded by this famous historian. Visitors can also admire many valuable works of art, such as a stone sculpture of the Madonna in the Romanesque style, and a painting entitled *The Madonna with Child and St. Catherine* by Lucas Cranach the Elder.

A gate of the cloister of the Dominican order, called Needle’s Eye, is one of many enchanting places in Sandomierz.



The Needle’s Eye

# STARY SĄCZ

Church and cloister of the Poor Clares



In 1999, during a pilgrimage to Poland, John Paul II officially canonised Princess Kinga, the founder of the cloister in Stary Sącz.

The cloister is the most interesting monument in the enchanting town of Stary Sącz, in which a medieval arrangement of streets has remained unchanged. The cloister was founded by St. Kinga (1234-1292), King Bolesław the Chaste's widow. The beautiful and pious Hungarian princess persuaded her husband to swear to celibacy and after his death became a nun. It was thanks to her that the cloister in Stary Sącz became famous as a cultural centre. The cloister attracted many composers and musicians, its library was full of thoroughly studied books, and it was probably there that the first Polish translation of Book of Psalms was made. Other aristocratic ladies followed the example of St. Kinga. For example, Princess Jolanta, the Prince of Kalisz's widow, and Hedwig, King Władysław the Elbow High's wife, became Poor Clares. The Trinity Church, built in the Gothic style, was completed about 1332, but most of the decorations, such as the three stucco altars from Baltazar Fontana's workshop, are in the baroque style. In the chapel of St. Kinga there is a valuable wooden sculpture of the patron from the 15th century. The original cloister has not survived, and the present one was built at the beginning of the 17th century. Here are illustrated medieval manuscripts, two of them from the end of the 13th century, ancient embroidery and mementoes of the founder – her ring, a spoon and the butt of a dagger.



The pulpit in the church of Poor Clares

The pulpit from 1671 in the church of the Poor Clares is especially remarkable. It shows the family tree of Christ: a trunk grows from the chest of Jesse, David's father. Christ's ancestors can be seen on subsequent branches. At the top there is the Madonna with Child.

# STRZELNO

Treasures of Romanesque art

The small town of Strzelno on the border between Wielkopolska and Kujawy is famous for its two structures in the Romanesque style: a rotunda of St. Procopius and the Trinity Church of the nuns of St. Norbert. The latter was renovated in the 18th century in the baroque style, consequently many of the original medieval decorations were concealed. After several centuries they were revealed in an unusual way. During the last months of World War II artillery fire caused so much damage that renovation was necessary. When old plaster was taken off the baroque style columns, the original columns in the Romanesque style could be seen. Two of them are covered with bas-reliefs that are unique in Europe, depicting allegories of virtues and faults. Some were revealed on the

The revealing of Romanesque columns with bas-reliefs in 1946 is regarded as one of the most sensational discoveries of art historians in Poland after World War II.



The church of St. Procopius

The rotunda of St. Procopius with an original vaulting is one of the best-preserved Romanesque churches in Poland.

column in the south (on the right). There is Justice (with scales in her hand), Prudence (with a book), Humility (with hands crossed on a chest), and Faith (with a cross). On the one in the north (on the left) one can see Anger (a woman tearing her hair), Homicide (a figure with a sword), Envy (with a snake), and Debauchery (a naked woman, which is extremely rare in the arts of that period). Altogether on each of the columns there are eighteen figures in groups of six, made in sandstone. These are the most valuable sculptures in the Romanesque style in Poland. Their artistic level and profound message, both theological and moral, prove the wide-mindedness of the founder, who might have been one of aristocratic nuns. It also proves that medieval art in Poland was not only a barren replica of European art.

One of the columns in the Trinity Church in Strzelno



# SZWAJCARIA KASZUBSKA

Land of clear lakes and picturesque hills



The Raduńskie lake in the Kaszuby Reserve

Joined ponds and lakes hidden in the forest adorn the beautiful landscape of Szwajcaria Kaszubska. Water in one of the lakes, called Lubygość, is orange-coloured due to a species of algae. On the peak of Wieżyca, the highest elevation in Pojezierze Kaszubskie (329 metres) there is a stone with a distance to... Switzerland ("Szwajcaria Kaszubska" means the "Switzerland of Kaszuby"). It was put there by the Swiss who learned the popular name of the region. How-

ever, Kaszuby is not only a land of lakes, wild forests and picturesque hills, it is also one of an increasingly few enclaves of genuine folk culture. The local culture is not just part of merchandising, or a tourist attraction, but a living source of tradition. "Kaszëbe" is the homeland of many local tribes, speaking a distinct language, used by most of the inhabitants. Most importantly, it is also the land of wonderful traditions and lavish feasts. Only there can one hear the unique instrument through which sound is emitted by water and horse hair.

This land of happiness is protected by good fairies, one of them being Borowa Ciotka (the Forest Aunt), who looks after the forest. Her bridesmaids, changed into stones, lie in the Długie Lake, near Węsiory.

In Łapalice, a small village near Chmielno, a worker from Gdańsk is building an unusual structure, resembling a fabulous castle, with 12 towers and many domes named after the apostles. It is near an artificial lake with an island. According to the builder, it will be used for noble purposes.



# ŚWIĘTA LIPKA

One of the oldest sanctuaries of the Virgin Mary in Poland



The cult of the Virgin Mary in this village dates back to the 14th century, but it is possible that it originated as early as the 12th century. A wooden sculpture of the Virgin Mary appeared on a linden tree. According to legend, it was hung by a prisoner who had been told by Mary to make the sculpture on the last day of his life. She gave him a piece of wood and a chisel, asking him to work. The unfortunate prisoner showed his sculpture to judges in the morning and they cancelled his sentence. Soon after, a chapel was built and around it a village. It belonged to the state of the Teutonic order, and afterwards, from 1525, to the Prussian state where Lutheran protestantism was the official religion. Pilgrimages to the site were forbidden and punished with death, and the chapel was razed to the ground. Still, for a hundred years, believers journeyed there and prayed. As late as the beginning of the 17th century Catholics were free to observe their traditions in Prussia. They bought the area from the protestants and built a new chapel. In 1640 the Jesuits who had settled there a few years earlier placed a painting of the Virgin Mary with Child, made in Vilnius. A magnificent church of the Visitation of the Holy Virgin Mary was built from 1688 for several dozen years. The interior is decorated with stuccos and trompe l'oeil paintings, perfectly imitating three-dimensional space. When looking up, visitors are convinced that they see a wonderful dome instead of a flat ceiling. An organ from the 18th century with moving figures is very remarkable.

The sanctuary in Święta Lipka was a destination for Polish kings going on pilgrimages.



The painting of the Virgin Mary with Child was crowned in 1968 by Polish Primate Stefan Wyszyński.

# ŚWIĘTY KRZYŻ

Ancient sanctuary



**E**ven before Christian times, the peak of Łysa Góra was a sanctuary, which is attested by the remains of a stone circle. According to legend, the Slavonic deities of Łada, Boda and Leli were offered sacrifices here. At the foot of the mountain there is a stone sculpture called Pilgrim, also connected with pagan cults. As the legend goes, it moves closer and closer to the peak, covering the distance of one sand grain a year. When it reaches the peak, the world will end.

The sanctuary is called Święty Krzyż (Holy Cross) because of the relics that are kept in the Benedictine abbey, founded in the 12th century, most probably by King Bolesław the Wrymouth. The golden age of the sanctuary was the 15th century, when it was a destination for pilgrims from the entire country. Władysław Jagiełło visited it seven times. At the end of the 16th and at the beginning of the 17th centuries on the path taken by pilgrims from Nowa Słupia to the peak of Łysa Góra, one of the first Polish Ways of the Cross was built. The cloister and church were destroyed several times by pagan Lithuanians and Tartars, as well as by fire. The present temple was built at the beginning of the 19th century, only a few years before the abbey was abolished by Russian authorities (in 1819). Although the cloister was abandoned, the entire time that Poland was occupied by neighbouring countries, pilgrimages to Łysa Góra rose. Very often it was also an opportunity for patriotic demonstrations. In 1882 part of the cloister was converted into a strict prison. In 1936 it was taken over by the

Congregation of the Oblate Missionaries, who it still belongs to.

The reliquary of the Holy Cross with five tiny pieces of wood, kept in the Benedictine abbey.



# TORUŃ

## The Old Town



Aerial view of the Old Town

Surrounded by massive walls, the city was a perfectly organised complex of two districts – the Old Town and the New Town. Only the richest families and traditional vendors living in the Old Town had an unlimited access to the Vistula river that was a source of prosperity.

There are few cities in Poland that boast so many monuments as Toruń. The complex of the old town is included in the UNESCO World Heritage list.

The inhabitants of Toruń are particularly proud of the Old Market, a trade and administrative centre in the Middle Ages. The city hall in the Gothic style is one of the most interesting structures of its kind in Europe. In the Great Room even kings were entertained. In front of the city hall there is a statue of the most famous inhabitant of Toruń, namely Nicholas Copernicus. The famous astronomer was probably born not far from there, in a neighbouring street, earlier called St. Anna St., in the house at 17 Anna St. The street is now named after him, and there is a museum of him in the house in the Gothic style.

The walls running along the banks of the Vistula are part of old defences. There were eight gates in the walls. Two opened to important communication routes, four to the bank of the Vistula and two were used for communication between the Old Town and the New Town. There was also a castle of the Teutonic order connected to the fortifications. In 1454 the inhabitants of Toruń, rebelling against the domination of the residents of the castle, captured it and destroyed it.

The famous Krzywa Wieża (Leaning Tower) in Toruń is part of the Gothic fortifications. Its slant is 1.4 metres. According to legend, it symbolises the moral deviousness of a member of the Teutonic order. He had to build the tower, punished for clandestine dates with a beautiful girl in the town.



# TRZĘSACZ

Ruins of a church



The first temple, built in the 12th century, was wooden. A brick temple was erected about 1270. Fragments of one of the walls are the only remains of a church built in the 15th century.

**O**n a high cliff, constantly washed away by the sea, there is a fragment of a wall made of red brick, the only remains of a church built there five centuries ago. It is hard to believe that the temple together with an adjacent cemetery was built in the middle of a village nearly two kilometres from the sea.

Why does the Baltic sea take the land piece by piece with such a vengeance? Once upon a time two young people from Trzęsacz, Każko and Ewa, were in love with one another. One day the boy went to sea and did not return. The girl died, mourning him. Since that time, on nights lit with moonlight, Ewa's ghost has strolled along the shore, waiting to meet Każko. The sea wants to cover the cemetery where the girl's body was laid with dark waves so the lovers can be together forever.

As another legend has it, fishermen from Trzęsacz caught Zielenica or Zefira, who was the daughter of the King of the Baltic sea. They kept her in prison in order that she could tempt fish into nets with her singing. The ruler could not bear his daughter's miserable fate. One day the swollen sea reached the prison and liberated the girl. In another version of this legend Zielenica died, when deprived of the sea. She was laid in the nearby cemetery. Since that time her father has been trying to take the girl's body and every year he captures a piece of the land.

In the mid-17th century the northern wall of the church was as close to the sea as 50 metres. Even then the waves made the priest inaudible. Eventually, for safety reasons, the church was closed. Fifty years later the first wall fell into the sea during a heavy storm. The remaining wall can fall at any moment.



The altar from the church in Trzęsacz

When the church in Trzęsacz was closed, the equipment was moved to the cathedral in the nearby Kamień Pomorski, where it has since been kept.

# TYNIEC

Benedictine abbey



The abbey in Tyniec is especially picturesque when looked at from the banks of the Vistula.

It is situated on a high, rocky hill 10 kilometres west of the centre of Cracow. It was probably founded by King Kazimierz the Restorer in 1044, though some historians are of the opinion that it was built by King Bolesław II in the years 1076-1079. It is also possible that the latter built only a church. For many centuries the abbey was a significant centre of intellectual and cultural life, from the very beginning famous for a huge library. *Sakramentarz tyniecki*, a 12th-century manuscript written in gold on purple parchment, and decorated with full-page illustrations was found in the abbey. Now it can be seen in Warsaw.

The cloister played an important defensive role during the period of wars for the throne in Cracow in the time of medieval division. Several centuries later it was used as a fortress by rebels fighting against Russia. In 1816 the Benedictine monks were thrown out by Austrian authorities, and in 1831 the abbey burnt down. The Benedictine order took it over again in 1939. Karol Wojtyła, later John Paul II, was a frequent guest there.

The abbey, destroyed and renovated many times, is a unique mixture of styles. In the years 1961-1965 the foundations were revealed as well as parts of the walls of an original church in the Romanesque style. Tombs of seven abbots from the 11th, 12th and 13th centuries were found there. In one of them a priceless golden goblet from the 11th century was found. It can be seen in the royal castle of Wawel. The renovation of the abbey has not been completed yet.

# WAMBIERZYCE

Church of the Visitation



The stairs leading to the church were built in the years 1864-1867. Thirty-three steps in the middle part symbolise the age of Christ, another fifteen are meant to symbolise the age of the Virgin Mary at Christ's birth. The impressive front facade of the church is richly decorated.

The history of Wambierzyce is closely related to the cult of the Virgin Mary, which was getting popular in the region as early as the 13th century. A blind man from Ratno (in other versions it is Raszewo or Raszków) named Jan regained his sight, suddenly seeing the Madonna with Child and a burning cross above her. After his miraculous healing Jan had a wooden sculpture made and put it into the hollow of a huge linden tree. According to tradition, a wooden church was built on the spot of the miracle. The church, mentioned in 1418, was later renovated several times.

In 1683 Daniel Paschazy von Osterberg, then owner of Wambierzyce, initiated the conversion of the village into a pilgrim's destination, like Jerusalem. Consequently there are twelve gates to the market and the topography of the village itself resembles that of Jerusalem. There are such places as the Siloe basin, Herod's palace and mountains like Sion, Sinai, Tabor and Golgota. The church of the Visitation, built at the beginning of the 18th century by Count von Goetzen, then owner of the village, has a facade that has a hint of Solomon's temple in Jerusalem (the facade is 50 metres long and 45 metres high). In the interior designed in the late baroque style there are many interesting objects, for example, a wooden sculpture of the Virgin from Wambierzyce. Contrary to legend, the sculpture was probably made in the 14th century.

On the hills surrounding the village there is a Way of the Cross, one of the biggest structures of this kind in Europe. Most of the 79 chapels are decorated with figural scenes or solitary sculptures. Amongst them there is a unique sculpture of a crucified woman. Her name was Vilgefortis and she did not want to marry a pagan. Taking on Christ's face features, she was crucified.



# WARSAW

## Łazienki

Originally, where now there is a geometrical park, one of the most beautiful parks in Europe, there was a royal zoological garden. The name of Łazienki (Baths) comes from a luxury bath pavillion, built there in the late 17th century by philosopher and poet Stanisław Herakliusz Lubomirski, who then owned the park. In 1764 it became a possession of newly elected King Stanisław August, who had the Baths on an island converted into a summer residence. The renovation took twenty years to complete and the result shows how the artistic taste of the ruler changed: from rich decorations of the rococo style to the modesty of neoclassical buildings. The palace was designed by architects Dominic Merlini and Johann Christian Kamsetzer, the king's favourites. They retained some fragments of the original building, so in two rooms – the Bath Room and the Bacchus' Room – one can still see the remains of the decorations in the Baths of Lubomirski. The interior was decorated by outstanding artists of that period. Especially remarkable is the two-floor-high Ball Room with statues of Apollo and Hercules. Many changes were also made in the park. In the years 1786-1788 Stara Pomarańczarnia was built (The Old Orange Greenhouse). Inside there is one of the few preserved court theatres from the 18th century. In 1790 a theatre was built on a small island. It is a copy of the ancient theatre in Herculaneum. One can still watch a play in the open air.

The park is a wonderful resting place, where visitors can ride a horse, take a ride in a stylish gondola or watch proud peacocks.



Pałac na Wodzie (The Palace on Water) is remarkable for its elegance and harmony. The surrounding lake, full of golden carp, adds to the grace of the landscape.



It was in this dining room that King Stanisław August had famous literary dinners on Thursdays, inviting poets and intellectuals.

# WARSAW

## Zamkowy Square and King Zygmunt's column

The square used to be a courtyard of the royal castle, protected from the south with walls. The present shape is a result of renovation done by Jakub Kubicki. His design included pulling down part of the walls and some buildings in front of the castle. The King Zygmunt's column is the oldest monument in Poland showing a historical figure. It was built in 1644 by King Władysław IV to commemorate his father, King Zygmunt III Waza. "To the most outstanding parent, in 1643, it was built to the one who does or should receive fame, a crown and gratitude from the posterity", reads a fragment of the Latin inscription on the plaque. The sculpture of the ruler was made by Clemente Molli from Bologna. The 275-centimetre-high bronze figure in armour, with a sword and a cross in his hands, and a crown on his head, was cast by Daniel Tym.

During the rebellion in September, 1944, the figure was destroyed by a tank shell. A year before that Tadeusz Hollender wrote as follows in a poem that won a prize in an underground literary competition: "And the people of the capital believe that when the sword is upright, it is a sign that the enemy will soon be covered with his blood, and the sword upright is a sign of new splendor".

The column was renovated in 1949.



When the royal castle was being renovated, the square also was changed. It is now 0.5-1.5 metres lower and paved with stones taken from Krakowskie Przedmieście and Grzybowskiego square. A line of clinker bricks shows the place of the old walls. Several granite steps were added to the base of King Zygmunt's column.

# WARSAW

## The Powązki cemetery



Many sculptures on the tombs in the Powązki cemetery are exceptional and at least moving works of art.

The oldest cemetery in Warsaw is not only a place of rest for the deceased, but also, like many Polish cemeteries, such as Rossa in Vilnius or Łyczakowski in Lvov, it is a unique monument of Polish culture and exhibition of the changes in traditions and artistic taste. Only recently have we realised the artistic significance of the cemetery, mostly due to the efforts of Jerzy Waldorff, who established in 1974 a special committee to gather the money necessary to collect data and renovate the most valuable tombs. Some of them are 200 years old, as the cemetery was created in 1790, after regulations banning burials around and in the basements of churches had been introduced. One of the decrees was entitled *The Universal Act for Free Cities Concerning Cemeteries and Slaughterhouses*. It may sound shocking now, but slaughterhouses and cemeteries were the source of many dangerous epidemics. Although the cemetery in Powązki was officially opened by King Stanisław August himself, being buried there was not regarded as an honour. However, everything changed

very quickly, and burials of celebrities and victims of terror of the occupiers initiated huge patriotic demonstrations. When Stanisław Moniuszko was laid in his tomb in 1872, as many as 80,000 inhabitants of Warsaw accompanied him on his last journey. In the Powązki cemetery lie the tombs of Prus, Wieniawski, Reymont, Leśmian, Żwirko and Wigura, Źwiklińska and Smosarska. It is estimated that one million people are buried here.

# WARSAW

## Royal Castle



In 1990 there was a symbolical ceremony: representants of the Polish emigre government gave Lech Wałęsa the presidential emblems used between World Wars.



The Knight's Room

Famous painters such as Caneletto and Marcello Bacciarelli, and sculptors (Andrzej Le Brun and Jakub Monaldi, for example) contributed to decorating the rooms of King Stanisław August. The decorations were thoroughly renovated after the restoration of the castle.

Like the column of King Zygmunt III Waza, the castle is one of the symbols of Warsaw. Destroyed during World War II, it was renovated in the 1970s. In 1984 it was opened to visitors. Originally, there was a dwelling for the princes of Mazowsze, built in the 15th century in the Gothic style. In the years 1598-1619 it was completely renovated when King Zygmunt III Waza moved his capital from Cracow to Warsaw. The facade facing the Vistula was renovated in the late baroque style in the mid-18th century. During the reign of Stanisław August Poniatowski an additional wing of a library was built, which survived World War II. There are rooms used by state institutions. The most interesting part of the castle is the Great Apartment, consisting of the Great Room, or the Ball Room, the Knight's Room, the Marble Room and the Conference Room, the Senator's Room, called the Room of the Constitution of May 3rd (it was here that the famous law was passed) and the king's private apartment. In the adjacent rooms of royal princes visitors can admire paintings by Jan Matejko, for example, *The Constitution of May the 3rd*. The first floor was decorated in accordance with the fashion of the 16th and 17th centuries. There is a gallery of decorative art on the second floor and a Gallery of the Lanckoroński family with two paintings by Rembrandt. The office of President Ignacy Mościcki has been renovated.

# WIELICZKA

Salt mine



The chapel of St. Kinga

The biggest and most beautiful underground chapel in the mine is the chapel of St. Kinga. According to legend, it was owing to her that salt was discovered in Wieliczka. When she was leaving Hungary, her birthplace, to marry King Bolesław the Chaste, she threw an engagement ring into the salt mine in Maramosz. On her way to Cracow she stopped in Wieliczka, where she ordered digging to take place. She found her ring in the first lump of salt that was discovered there.

**I**t is the only salt mine in the world that has been working for 700 years without any break. The underground 3-kilometre-long route is one of the biggest tourist attractions in Poland. Visitors can explore long tunnels joining old caves in the three highest levels of the mine (the maximum depth is 136 metres). There are nine tunnels altogether. The deepest one is at a depth of 330 metres, and the total length of the tunnels and caves is about 300 kilometres.

Salt was produced here as early as prehistoric times. Then salty water was heated to get salt. The first shafts reaching the deposits of salt were built at the end of the 13th and at the beginning of the 14th centuries. In 1368 King Kazimierz the Great issued a law concerning the rules of mining salt. The deposits in Wieliczka belonged to the king. At the end of the 14th century mining salt was the source of a third of all the income of the state. Thanks to salt the first Polish university was built. The mine in Wieliczka was one of the biggest and best-managed factories in Europe, but working there required much bravery. Fire was the worst hazard as all the tunnels were fortified by wooden constructions. Several caves and subsequently some houses on the ground collapsed in 1696 after a fire. It happened during the night, the ground sinking so slowly that only in the morning did the inhabitants realise that they were at the bottom of a huge hollow. They left, climbing out through roofs and with ladders. After the accident miners were not allowed to build wooden altars and

chapels, so they started to use salt instead. Two years after the disastrous fire the oldest chapel of St. Anthony was consecrated.



A silver horn given to the guild of salt miners by Seweryn Boner, a royal official responsible for the industry in 1534, is one of the most valuable items in the museum. A unique collection of over 400 saltcellars is also worth seeing.

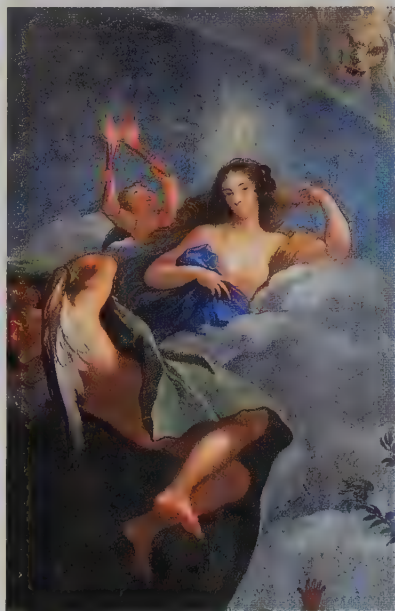
# WILANÓW

Favourite residence of King Jan III Sobieski



The palace is a unique mixture of the charm of Polish mansion houses and the glamour of the Italian baroque style.

Marysieńka, the beloved wife of King Jan III Sobieski, was painted many times by artists working in Wilanów. Her portraits, in which she is often shown as a mythological figure, were used to decorate the walls and ceilings of private royal apartments.



Built by the Italian architect Agostino Locci, the palace was renovated several times during the life of King Jan III Sobieski, after each renovation becoming more luxurious and monumental. It was called Villa Nova, which was soon polonised into Wilanów. The interior was decorated by the best artists of that period, for example Jerzy Eleuter Szymonowicz-Siemiginowski, who attended foreign studios thanks to the generosity of the king, and painted beautiful mythological scenes. They were discovered in the years 1955-1965, and are regarded as one of the most important achievements in renovation art after World War II. The palace, during the rebellion of Kościuszko slightly damaged and robbed by the owner, Izabela Lubomirska, who had preferred Łańcut to Wilanów, and had taken there most of the works of art, belonged to her son-in-law, Stanisław Kostka Potocki, at the end of the 18th and at the beginning of the 19th centuries. This outstanding art collector filled Wilanów with new masterpieces. Especially valuable are the collections of Etruscan pottery and Roman sculptures in addition to a painting by Jacques Louis David showing Potocki himself on horseback. Until 1939 Wilanów was a private property. After World War II it was taken over by the state and converted into a museum. Visitors can there see the royal apartments and a Gallery of Polish Portraits with paintings made from the 16th to the 19th centuries. In the old racing school the first museum of posters in the world was opened in the 1960s.

# THE SIKLAWA WATERFALL

Biggest waterfall in the Tatras



Though climbing the top of the waterfall is not demanding, there have been deaths. In 1924, Jan Gąsienica Daniel, a well-known Tatra guide, descending with a tourist, slipped and died in the waters of the stream. In his dying moment, he pointed out the way to the tourist.

**S**eweryn Goszczyński described his impressions 200 years ago as follows: "About a hundred steps from us there was a waterfall roaring, boiling and covering us with mist. Split by a rock, it falls in two streams (...) Falling water, broken, boiling and whirling seems to be only foam and diamonds."

The Rostoka river, flowing from the Wielki Lake in the Five Lakes Valley, falls to the Rostoka Valley. The river is divided into several branches, forming waterfalls, like Siklawka. Authors of tourist guides and encyclopaedias are not sure how big the waterfall is, but it is usually assumed to be about 70 metres high. It creates the biggest effect after heavy rains. At the beginning of the 19th century,

when the Tatras were being "discovered", Siklawka became a great tourist attraction. One of the most popular tourist routes became established there.

# WROCLAW

Town hall in the Gothic style



The city hall consists of three parts. The 66-metre-high tower is crowned with a spire in the Renaissance style.

Wrocław was meant to develop very quickly in the 13th century when the town was located in accordance with German (Magdeburg) law in 1261, the result being independence from the local prince. It was then that a town hall was built: a one-storey building erected in the middle of the market. Inhabitants assembled there every year, and normally it was used as a marketplace. Due to numerous renovations in the years 1327-1504 one of the most magnificent buildings of medieval Europe was created. Every detail – richly decorated facades, a sundial made in 1580, over 16 square metres big, and a wonderful baroque

portal with the city sign that was granted in 1520 – is a display of the richness and power of the town and its magistrates. The interior decorations in the Gothic style have remained, consisting of unique vaulting and bas-reliefs. The building is now the site of the Historical Museum of the City of Wrocław. In other rooms, such as the Bourgeois Room, the Court Room, the Secretary and the Council Room, there are collections of artifacts commemorating the history of the city and its mint.

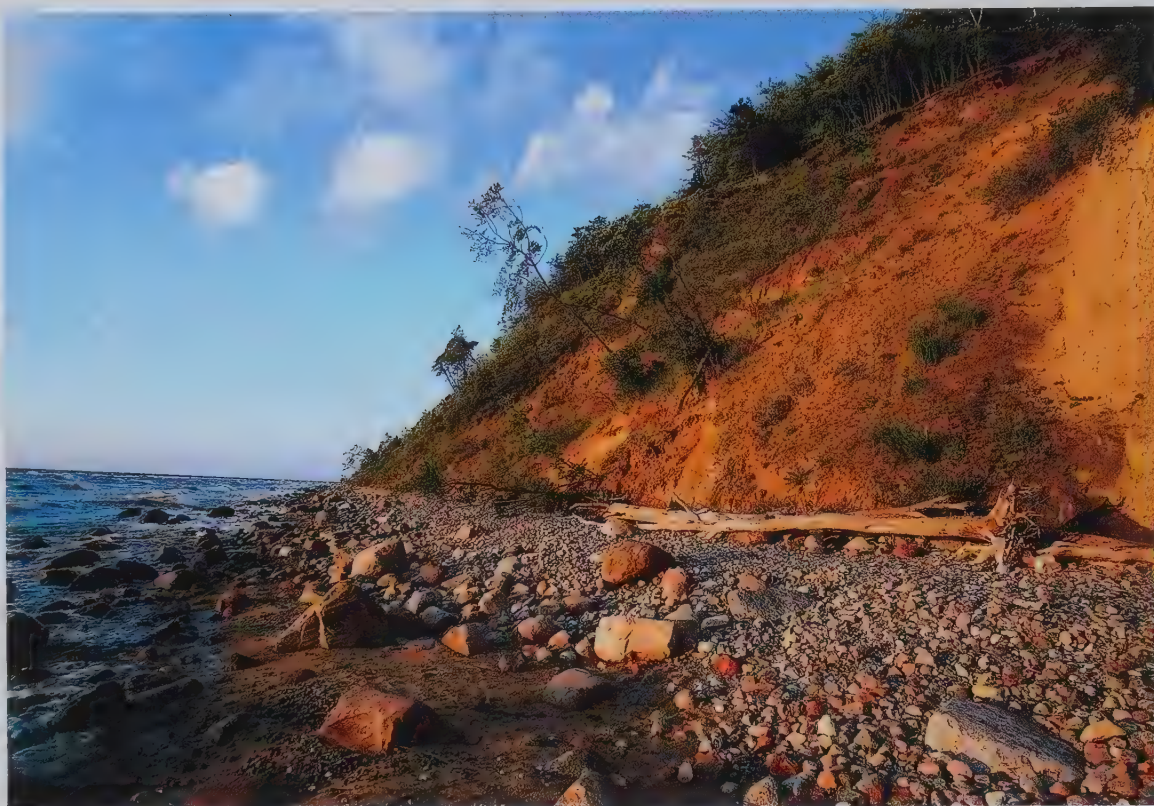
In the 13th century houses were built around the market. Most of them were destroyed during World War II, and renovated later, so in only a few places old medieval walls can still be seen. The gate joining a house in the Renaissance style, called Jaś, and Małgosia, a house in the baroque style, leads from the market to the beautiful Gothic church of St. Elisabeth.



The three-nave Great Room covers a big part of the second floor of the town hall. Its vaulting is decorated with 161 keystones with bas-reliefs. This magnificent decoration was meant to show the political power of the town.

# WOLIN ISLAND

The realm of the white-tailed eagle



The cliff between Międzyzdroje and Wiselka

The cliff on the island of Wolin is one of the highest and most interesting stretches on the Polish shore of the Baltic sea. It is in places nearly as high as 100 metres (the peak of Gosań is 95 metres high). At the foot of the cliff there are rocks transported by a glacier from the floor of the Baltic and from Scandinavia.

Few people know that at the end of the 9th and at the beginning of the 10th centuries Wolin was the biggest town in Europe. The fame of Wolin reached even the Far North: named Jomsborg, it was mentioned in all Scandinavian legends. The town was on a trade route, the result being that it was a gate to routes leading to the interior, and also a place enabling communication with the entire ancient world via the Baltic sea.

Now it is a gate leading to an oasis of serenity and beautiful wildlife, the realm of the white-tailed eagle – the island of Wolin. A large

part of it was converted into a national park in 1960. This is the only national park in Poland that also covers the sea, as it is meant to protect the cliff. Its steep, 100-metre-high slopes are a unique feature of the Polish shore of the Baltic sea. The hills on Wolin island are mostly covered with the Pomeranian beech forest with its characteristic undergrowth, shaded but not very dense. One of the most interesting places on the island is the mouth of the Świna. At the time of gales water from the Baltic sea is pushed to the mouth of the river and then to Kanał Szczeciński (the Szczeciński canal). Due to that the archipelago of the so-called backward delta was formed. Some of the islands are regarded as the biggest natural reserves of birds in Central Europe, for example Karsiborska Kępa.



A view of the islands of the backward delta of the Świna from the hill Zielenka

# ZAKOPANE

Resort at the foot of the Tatras



The chapel in Jaszczurówka

Designed by Stanisław Wyspiański and built in the years 1905-1907, the chapel of the Holy Heart of Lord Jesus in Jaszczurówka is a fine example of the local architectural style.



Jan Krzeptowski Sabala, a legendary musician, storyteller and one of the first Tatra guides, used to rob and poach in his youth. He often trekked with Tytus Chałubiński.

Mieczysław Orłowicz wrote in 1926 as follows: "Every year thousands of visitors have arrived here for many years (...) some looking for health, others for a rest, and others for entertainment. Most of them, however, come here for the Tatras and trekking." The town, at an elevation of 800-1,000 metres, at the foot of the highest Polish mountains is still a main tourist base and a centre of winter sports. The origins of Zakopane date back to the 16th century. The village was built when local shepherds started to settle down. The name, mentioned already in an act from 1605, comes from the word "kopane", meaning deforested and arable ground. The town has been developing rapidly since the mid-19th century, in part thanks to Tytus Chałubiński, who was a great promoter of the climate of Zakopane and founder of Towarzystwo Tatrzańskie (the Tatra Society), established in 1874.

The oldest part of the town is around a wooden church and an old cemetery from the 19th century in Pęksowe Brzyzko, where Tytus Chałubiński, Jan Krzeptowski (a famous local bard), Kornel Makuszyński and Stanisław Witkiewicz are buried.

# LAKE SOLIŃSKIE

Reservoir lake in the Bieszczady



**T**he Solińskie lake was formed in 1968 when a dam was built in Solina-Zabrodzie on the San and the Solinka. The dam is 664 metres long and 81.8 metres high (the highest dam in Poland). The shore of the lake is over 150 kilometres long, the average depth is 25 metres and near the dam it reaches 60 metres. The lake is at an elevation of 420 metres, but it can change every day, sometimes by as much as one metre. There is a 120-MW power plant.

The southern part of the lake splits into two branches, one of them covering the valley of the Solinka up to Wołkowyja and Bukowiec, the other, being longer, fills the valley of the San, reaching Rajskie. The Solińskie lake is also a fire emergency reservoir. On the bottom of the lake there are the remains of an old village Solina, mentioned as early as the mid-15th century. The modern town is a popular tourist spot both in winter and summer. There are piers used by tourist ships, and in Solina-Jaworze there is a ski-lift on the slopes of mount Jawor. In the village Polańczyk there are spas, hotels and places offering farm holidays.

The huge, ever changing reservoir lake (21 square kilometres big) is often photographed.

# ZAMOŚĆ

Renaissance town



The town hall and market in Zamość

In 1992 Zamość was included in the UNESCO World Heritage list.

Rich traders adorned their houses with both figures of the patron saints and angels, as well as fabulous plant and animal motifs, for example dragons.



A bas-relief from a trader's house - the Madonna with Child

Zamość was built by Chancellor and General Jan Zamoyski in 1580. The town is unique in the world for its urban planning idea. The plan was based on the treaties of architects of the 16th century. The town was sketched by the Italian architect Bernardo Morando, who did not forget to build his own beautiful house there. Inside the massive town walls there were the main market with a town hall, two secondary markets, a collegiate church (a cathedral since 1992), where in the basements are buried all the descendants of the founder of the town, an Orthodox church (now belonging to the Catholic Church), a synagogue (now a library), a palace and a high school named Akademia Zamojska. There used to be three gates: Lubelska, Szczebrzeska and Lwowska. A square city market, 100 by 100 metres, is surrounded with houses decorated with colonnades, numerous sculptures, bas-reliefs and delicate attics. The Armenian houses in the northern row of the houses surrounding the market are regarded as the most beautiful. In a house at no. 2 there has been a pharmacy for over 350 years. The town hall in Zamość is a unique monument. It was designed by Morando and renovated in the years 1639-1651. It was then that monumental stairs were built. It is said that at the time of Zamoyski a trumpet was blown from the slender tower of the city hall in only three directions as the proud aristocrat did not want to greet Cracow.

# ŻELAZOWA WOLA

The birthplace of Fryderyk Chopin



The house built on the site of the building where Chopin was born

In the 1930s a romantic park was created round the house. The trees and bushes were given for free by gardeners from the entire country.



Fryderyk Chopin celebrated his birthday on March 1st. However, his baptism certificate was found in a parish book in Brochów with the date of February 22nd.

A white house with a porch supported by two columns was built on the foundations of an older, much humbler building, where Chopin was born. His parents, Nicolas Chopin from France, a private teacher in count Skarbek's house, and Tekla Justyna née Krzyżanowska, his wife, lived in a one-storey, thatched building being the wing of a mansion house. It was there that in 1807 their daughter Ludwika was born, and after three years their only son Fryderyk, who was only eight months old when the family moved to Warsaw.

The house of the Skarbek family was burnt down when Napoleon's army marched through in 1812. One of the wings was also destroyed by fire over a hundred years later. The miraculously saved other wing (the previous dwelling of the Chopins) was a warehouse and even a pigsty for some time. Many Poles regarded it as a disgrace. Only in 1928 the building was bought from private owners and renovated with the intention of creating a museum there. Two rooms were carefully reconstructed: a dining room and Tekla Chopin's room with an adjacent bedroom, where Chopin was probably born. In his room visitors can see an old piano with a vertical case. Every summer Sunday polonaises and mazurkas are played in the music room.

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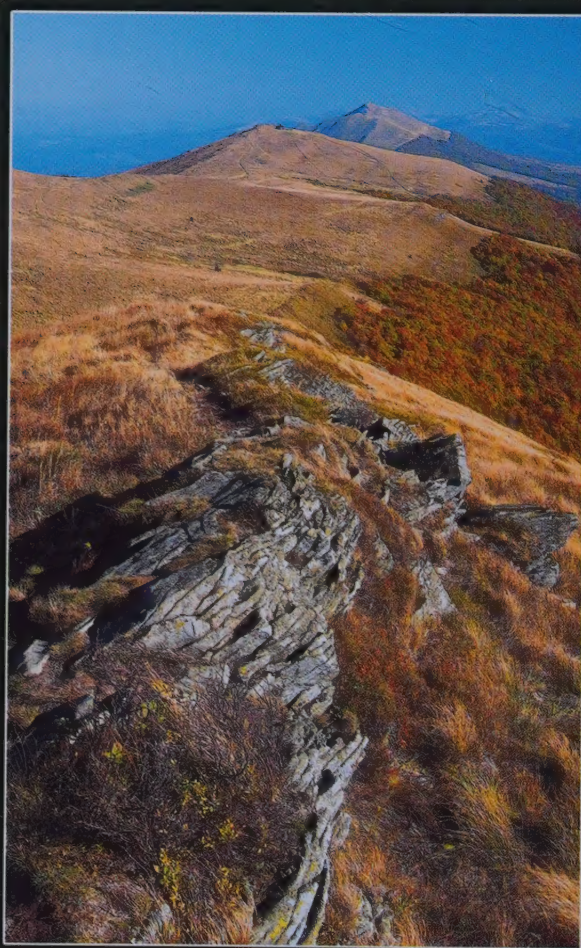






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